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AN  
EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT:

WHEREIN

EACH CHAPTER IS SUMMED UP IN ITS CONTENTS: THE SACRED TEXT INSERTED AT LARGE  
IN DISTINCT PARAGRAPHS; EACH PARAGRAPH REDUCED TO ITS PROPER  
HEADS: THE SENSE GIVEN, AND LARGELY ILLUSTRATED:

WITH

PRACTICAL REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS.

BY

MATTHEW HENRY,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

A NEW EDITION, CAREFULLY REVISED AND CORRECTED.  
IN NINE VOLUMES.

VOL. VIII.—JOHN TO ACTS.

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## P R E F A C E.

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AFTER much expectation, and many enquiries, the last volume of the late reverend Mr. Henry's Exposition now appears in the world. The common disadvantages that attend posthumous productions will doubtless be discerned in this; but we hope, though there are diversities of gifts, there will be found to be the same spirit. Some of the relations and hearers of that excellent person have been at the pains of transcribing the notes they took in short-hand of this part of the holy scripture, when expounded by him in his family or in the congregation; they have furnished us with very good materials for the finishing of this great work, and we doubt not but that the ministers who have been concerned in it have made that use of those assistances which may entitle this compoſure to the honour of Mr. Henry's name; and, if so, they can very willingly conceal their own.

The New Testament may be very properly divided into two parts, the one *historical* the other *epistolary*. It is the exposition of the latter we now recommend, and shall offer some thoughts on the epistolary way of writing in general, and then proceed to observe the divine authority of these epistles, together with the style, matter, method, and design of them, leaving what might be said concerning the several inspired penmen to the prefaces appertaining to the particular epistles.

As to the epistolary way of writing, it may be sufficient to observe that it has usually three properties:—It may in some things be more *difficult* to be understood, but then it is very *profitable* and very *pleasant*; these will be found to be the properties of these sacred letters. We shall meet with things not easy to be understood, especially in some parts of them, where we cannot so well discover the particular occasions on which they were written or the questions or matters of fact to which they refer; but this is abundantly compensated by the profit which will accrue to those that read them with due attention. They will find the strongest reasoning, the most moving expostulations, and warm and pressing exhortations, mixed with seasonable cautions and reproofs, which are all admirably fitted to impress the mind with suitable sentiments and affections. And how much solid pleasure and delight must this afford to persons of a serious and religious spirit, especially when they wisely and faithfully apply to themselves what they find to suit their case! Thus they will appear to be as truly written to them as if their names were superscribed on them. It is natural for us to be very much pleased in perusing a wise and kind letter full of instruction and comfort, sent to us by an absent friend: how then should we prize this part of holy scripture, when we consider herein that our God and Saviour has written these letters *to us*, in which we have the great things of his law and gospel, the things that belong to our peace! By these means not only the holy apostles, *being dead, yet speak*, but the Lord of the prophets and apostles continues to speak and write to us; and while we read them with proper affections, and follow them with suitable petitions and thanksgivings, a blessed correspondence and intercourse will be kept up between heaven and us, while we are yet sojourners in the earth.

But it is the divine inspiration and authority of these epistles we are especially concerned to know; and it is of the last importance that in this our minds be fully established. And we have strong and clear evidence that these epistles were written by the apostles of our Lord Jesus, and



that they (like the prophets of the Old Testament) spoke and wrote *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. These epistles have in all ages of the church been received by Christians as a part of those holy scriptures that are *given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, and are able to make us wise to salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ*; they are part of that perpetual universal rule of faith and life which contains doctrines and revelations we are bound to believe with a divine faith, as coming from the God of truth, and duties to be practised by us in obedience to the will of God, *acknowledging that the things written therein are the commandments of God*, 1 Cor. xiv. 37. And, for the same reasons that lead us to acknowledge the other parts of the Bible to be the word of God, we must own these to be so too. If there is good reason (as indeed there is) to believe that the books of Moses were written by inspiration of God, there is the same reason to believe that the writings of the prophets were also from God, because the law and the prophets speak the same things, and such things as none but the Holy Ghost could teach; and, if we must with a divine faith believe the Old Testament to be a revelation from God, we cannot with any good reason question the divine authority of the New, when we consider how exactly the histories of the one agree with the prophecies of the other, and how the dark types and shadows of the law are illustrated and accomplished in the gospel. Nor can any person who pretends to believe the divine authority of the historical part of the New Testament, containing the Gospels and the Acts, with good reason question the equal authority of the epistolary part; for the subject-matter of all these epistles, as well as of the sermons of the apostles, is the *word of God* (Rom. x. 17; 1 Thess. ii. 13; Col. i. 25), and the *gospel of God* (Rom. xv. 16; 2 Cor. xi. 7), and the *gospel of Christ*, 2 Cor. ii. 12. We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*; and, as Moses wrote of Christ, so did all the prophets, for the Spirit of Christ in them did testify of him. And the apostles confirmed what Christ himself began to teach, *God also bearing them witness with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will*, Heb. ii. 3, 4. The manifestation of God in the flesh, and the things he began both to do and teach until the day in which he was taken up, together with his sufferings unto death, and his resurrection (which things are declared to us, and are firmly to be believed, and strictly regarded by us), do give us an ample account of the way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ; but still it was the will of our blessed Lord that his apostles should not only publish his gospel to all the world, but also that, after his resurrection, they should declare some things more plainly concerning him than he thought fit to do while he was here on earth, for which end he promised to send his Holy Spirit to teach them all things, to bring all things to their remembrance which he had spoken unto them, John xiv. 26. For he told them (John xvi. 12, 13), *I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now; but when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall lead you into all truth, and shall show you things to come*. Accordingly we find there was a wonderful effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (who in these epistles are called the servants, ambassadors, and ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God), under whose infallible guidance they preached the gospel, and declared the whole counsel of God, and that with amazing courage and success. Satan every where falling down before them like lightning from heaven. That in preaching the gospel they were under the influence of the infallible Spirit is undeniable, from the miraculous gifts and powers they received for their work, particularly that gift of tongues so necessary for the publication of the gospel throughout the world to nations of different languages; nor must we omit that mighty power that accompanied the word preached, bringing multitudes to the obedience of faith, notwithstanding all opposition from earth and hell, and the potent lusts in the hearts of those who were turned from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, that delivered us from the wrath to come. Now that they were under the same mighty influence in writing these epistles as in preaching cannot be denied. Such infallible assistance seems to be as needful at least to direct their writing as their preaching, considering that these epistles were written to keep in memory those things that had been delivered by word of mouth (2 Pet. i. 15), and to rectify the mistakes that might arise about some expressions that had been used in preaching (2 Thess. ii. 2), and were to remain as a standing rule and record to which believers were to appeal, for defending the truth and discovering error, and a proper means to transmit the truths of the gospel to posterity, even to the end of time. Besides, the writers of these epistles have declared that what they wrote was from God: now they must know whether they had the special assistance of the divine Spirit or no, in their writing as well as preaching; and they in all things appear to have been men of



such probity that they would not dare to say they had the Spirit of God when they had it not, or if they so much as doubted whether they had it or not; yea, they are careful, when they speak their own private opinion, or only under some common influence, to tell the world that not the Lord, but they, spoke those things, but that in the rest it was not they but the Lord, 1 Cor. vii. 10, 12, &c. And the apostle Paul makes the acknowledgment of this their inspiration to be a test to try those that pretended to be prophets or spiritual: *Let them* (says he) *acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*, 1 Cor. xiv. 37. And the apostle Peter gives this as the reason of his writing, that those he wrote to *might after his decease have those things always in remembrance* (2 Pet. i. 15), which afterwards he calls the *commandment of the apostles of the Lord* (ch. iii. 1, 2), and so of the Lord himself. And the apostle John declareth (1 John iv. 6), *We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us; by this we know the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

As to the style of these epistles, though it be necessary we should believe a divine influence superintending the several writers of them, yet it is not easy to explain the manner of it, nor to determine whether and in what particulars the words they wrote were dictated to them by the Holy Spirit, as mere amanuenses, or how far their own memories, and reasoning faculties, and other natural or acquired endowments, were employed under the inspection of the Spirit. We must believe that these holy men spoke and wrote *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, that he put them on and assisted them in this work. It is very probable that sometimes he not only suggested the very thoughts in their minds, but put words into their mouths, and always infallibly guided them into all truth, both when they expounded the scriptures of the Old Testament and when they gave rules for our faith and practice in the gospel church state. And yet perhaps it may be allowed, without any diminution to the authority of these epistles, that the penmen of them made some use of their own reasoning powers and different endowments in their manner of writing, as well as of their different sorts of chirography; and that by this we are to account for that difference of style which has been observed between the writings of Paul, who was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and those of Peter and John, who were fishermen. The like difference may be discerned between the style of the prophet Isaiah, who was educated in a court, and that of Amos, who was one of the herdsmen of Tekoa. However, the best way to understand these scriptures aright is not to criticise too nicely upon the words and phrases, but to attend carefully to the drift and design of these inspired writers in them.

The *subject-matter* of these epistles is entirely conformable to the rest of the scriptures. In them we find frequent reference to some passages of the Old Testament, and explanations of them: in the epistle to the Hebrews we have the best exposition of the Levitical law. Indeed the New Testament refers to, and in a manner builds upon, the Old, showing the accomplishment of all the ancient promises and prophecies concerning the Messiah, and explains all the antiquated types and shadows of the good things that were then to come. But, besides these references to the preceding part of holy writ, in some of these epistles there are contained prophecies, either wholly new or at least more largely and plainly revealed, as that in the *Revelation* concerning the rise, reign, and fall of antichrist, of which great apostasy we have some account in 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4, and in 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. And in these epistles we have several of the great doctrines of the gospel more fully discussed than elsewhere, particularly the doctrine of original sin, of the sin that dwells in the regenerate, and of justification by the righteousness of Christ, of the abolishing of the Jewish rites and ceremonies, of the true nature and design of the seals of the new covenant, the obligations they bring us under, and their perpetual use in the Christian church.

The general method of these epistles is such as best serves the end or design of them, which is indeed the end of the whole scripture—practical godliness, out of a principle of divine love, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. Accordingly most of the epistles begin with the great doctrines of the gospel, the articles of the Christian faith, which, when received, work by love, purify the conscience, and produce evangelical obedience; and, after these principles have been laid down, practical conclusions are drawn and urged from them. In taking this method there is a regard paid to the nature and faculties of the soul of man (where the understanding is to lead the way, the will, affections, and executive powers, to follow after), and to the nature of religion in general, which is a reasonable service. We are not to be determined by superstitious fancies, nor by blind passions, but by a sound judgment and good understanding in the mind and will of God. By this we are taught how necessary it is that faith and practice, truth and holiness, be

joined together, that the performance of moral duties will never be acceptable to God nor available to our own salvation, without the belief of the truth, since those who make shipwreck of the faith seldom maintain a good conscience, and the most solemn profession of the faith will never save those that *hold the truth in unrighteousness*.

The particular occasions upon which these epistles were written do not so evidently appear in them all as in some. The first to the Corinthians seems to have taken its rise from the unhappy divisions that so early rose in the churches of Christ, through the emulation of the ministers and personal affections of the people; but it does not confine itself to that subject. That to the Galatians seems directed chiefly against those judaizing teachers that went about to draw the Gentile converts away from the simplicity of the gospel in doctrine and worship. The epistle to the Hebrews is manifestly calculated to wean the converted Jews from those Mosaic rites and ceremonies for which they retained too great a fondness, and to reconcile them to the abolition of that economy. Those epistles that are directed to particular persons more evidently carry their design in them, which he that runs may read. But this is certain, none of these epistles are of private interpretation. Most of the psalms and of the prophecies of the Old Testament were penned or pronounced on particular occasions, and yet they are of standing and universal use, and very instructive even to us upon whom the ends of the world have come. And so are those epistles that seem to have been most limited in the rise and occasion of them. There will always be need enough to warn Christians against uncharitable divisions, against corrupting the faith and worship of the gospel; and, whenever the case is the same, these epistles are as certainly directed to such churches and persons as if they had been inscribed to them.

These general observations, we suppose, may be sufficient to introduce the reader into the book itself; let us now take a short view of the whole work, of which this posthumous piece is the conclusion. It is now about fourteen years since the first part of this exposition of the Bible was made public. In five years' time the Old Testament was finished in four volumes. The first volume of the New Testament was longer in hand; for though the ever-memorable author was always fully employed in the ordinary work of his ministry, yet those last years of his life, in which he drew up the exposition upon the historical part of the New Testament, were less at his own command than any other had been. His removal to Hackney, his almost continual preaching from day to day, his journeys to Chester, and the necessity of more frequent visits to his friends in and about London, together with a gradual sensible decay of health, will more than excuse the three years' time that passed before that was finished. And under such difficulties none but a man of his holy zeal, unwearied industry, and great sagacity, could have gone through such a service in that space of time. He lived not to see that volume published, though left by him ready for the press. The church of God was suddenly deprived of one of the most useful ministers of the age. We have been gathering up the fragments of those feasts with which he used to entertain his family and friends, in his delightful work of opening the scriptures. What remains is that we recommend the whole of this work to the acceptance and blessing of our God and Saviour, to whose honour and interest it was from the first directed and devoted. We need not be very solicitous about the acceptance it may meet with in the world: what has been before published has been received and read with great pleasure and advantage by the most serious experienced Christians in Great Britain and Ireland; and the many loud calls there have been for the publishing of this supplement, and reprinting the whole, leave us no room to doubt but that it will meet with a hearty welcome. Though it must be acknowledged that we live in an age which by feeding upon ashes and the wind, has very much lost the relish of every thing that is spiritual and evangelical, yet we persuade ourselves there will still be found many who, *by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*. Those that may think the expository notes too long, especially for family worship, may easily relieve themselves, either by reading a less part of the chapter at one time, or by abridging the annotations, and perusing the rest when they have more leisure; for, though it must be owned they are somewhat copious, yet we are persuaded that those who peruse them seriously will find nothing in them superfluous or impertinent; and, if any where some things in the comment do not seem to flow so naturally and necessarily from the text, we believe when they are well considered and compared it will appear they come under the analogy and general reason of the subject, and truly belong to it. If there be any that think this exposition of the Bible is too plain and familiar, that it wants the beauties of oratory and the strength of criticism, we only wish that they will read it over again with due attention, and we are pretty confident they will find the style natural, clear, and comprehensive: and we think they will hardly



be able to produce one valuable criticism out of the most learned commentators but they will have it in this exposition, though couched in plain terms, and not brought in as of a critical nature. No man was more happy than Mr. Henry in that useful talent of making dark things plain, while too many, that value themselves upon their criticising faculty, affect rather to make plain things dark.

But we leave this great and good work to speak for itself, and doubt not but it will grow in its use and esteem, and will, through the blessing of God, help to revive and promote family religion and scriptural knowledge, and support the credit of scripture commentaries, though couched in human expressions. These have been always accounted the great treasures of the church, and, when done with judgment, have been so far from lessening the authority of the Bible that they have greatly promoted its honour and usefulness.

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The following are the ministers by whom the Exposition on the Epistolary writings, and the Revelation, was completed, as given by J. B. Williams, Esq., LL.D., F.S.A., in his *Memoirs of the Life, Character, and Writings, of the Rev. Matthew Henry*, 8vo. p. 308.

Romans . . . . .	Mr. [afterwards Dr.] John Evans.
1 Corinthians . . . . .	Mr. Simon Browne.
2 Corinthians . . . . .	Mr. Daniel Mayo.
Galatians . . . . .	Mr. Joshua Bayes.
Ephesians . . . . .	Mr. Samuel Rosewell.
Philippians . . . . .	{ Mr. [afterwards Dr.] William Harris.
Colossians . . . . .	
1 Thessalonians . . . . .	{ Mr. Daniel Mayo.
2 Thessalonians . . . . .	
1 Timothy . . . . .	{ Mr. Benjamin Andrews Atkinson
2 Timothy . . . . .	
Titus . . . . .	{ Mr. Jeremiah Smith.
Philemon . . . . .	
Hebrews . . . . .	Mr. William Tong.
James . . . . .	Dr. S. Wright.
1 Peter . . . . .	Mr. Zech. Merrill.
2 Peter . . . . .	Mr. Joseph Hill.
1, 2, and 3 John . . . . .	Mr. John Reynolds, of Shrewsbury
Jude . . . . .	Mr. John Billingsley.
Revelations . . . . .	Mr. William Tong.



AN  
EXPOSITION,  
WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,  
OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO  
ST. JOHN.

It is not material to enquire when and where this gospel was written; we are sure that it was given by inspiration of God to John, the brother of James, one of the twelve apostles, distinguished by the honourable character of *that disciple whom Jesus loved*, one of the first three of the worthies of the Son of David, whom he took to be the witnesses of his retirements, particularly of his transfiguration and his agony. The ancients tell us that John lived longest of all the twelve apostles, and was the only one of them that died a natural death, all the rest suffering martyrdom; and some of them say that he wrote this gospel at Ephesus, at the request of the ministers of the several churches of Asia, in opposition to the heresy of Corinthus and the Ebionites, who held that our Lord was a *mere man*. It seems most probable that he wrote it before his banishment into the isle of Patmos, for there he wrote his *Apocalypse*, the close of which seems designed for the closing up of the canon of scripture; and, if so, this gospel was not written after. I cannot therefore give credit to those later fathers, who say that he wrote it in his banishment, or after his return from it, many years after the destruction of Jerusalem; when he was ninety years old, saith one of them; when he was a hundred, saith another of them. However, it is clear that he wrote last of the four evangelists, and, comparing his gospel with theirs, we may observe, 1. That he *relates what they had omitted*; he *brings up the rear*, and his gospel is as the *rearward or gathering host*; it gleans up what they had passed by. Thus there was a *later* collection of Solomon's wise sayings (Prov. xxv. 1), and yet far short of what he delivered, 1 Kings iv. 32. 2. That he gives us more of the *mystery* of that of which the other evangelists gave us only the *history*. It was necessary that the matters of fact should be first settled, which was done in their *declarations of those things which Jesus began both to do and teach*, Luke i. 1; Acts i. 1. But, this being done out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, *John goes on to perfection* (Heb. vi. 1), *not laying again the foundation*, but building upon it, leading us more within the veil. Some of the ancients observe that the other evangelists wrote more of the *τὰ σωματικά*—the *bodily* things of Christ; but John writes of the *τὰ πνευματικά*—the *spiritual* things of the gospel, the life and soul of it; therefore some have called this gospel the *key of the evangelists*. Here it is that a *door is opened in heaven*, and the first voice we hear is, *Come up hither, come up higher*. Some of the ancients, that supposed the four living creatures in John's vision to represent the four evangelists, make John himself to be the *flying eagle*, so *high* does he *soar*, and so *clearly* does he *see* into divine and heavenly things.

#### CHAP. I.

The scope and design of this chapter is to confirm our faith in Christ as the eternal Son of God, and the true Messiah and Saviour of the world, that we may be brought to receive him, and rely upon him, as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and to give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved, by him. In order to this, we have here, I. An account given of him by the inspired penman himself, fairly laying down, in the beginning, what he designed his whole book should be the proof of, ver. 1—5; and again, ver. 10—14; and again, ver. 16—18. II. The testimony of John Baptist concerning him (ver. 6—9; and again, ver. 13); but most fully and particularly, ver. 19—37. III. His own manifestation of himself to Andrew and Peter (ver. 38—42), to Philip and Nathanael, ver. 43—51.

**I**N the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All

things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Austin says (*de Civitate Dei*, lib. x. cap. 29) that his friend Simplicius told him he had heard a Platonic philosopher say that these first verses of St. John's gospel were *worthy to be written in letters of gold*. The learned Francis Junius, in the account he gives of his own life, tells how he was in his youth



infected with loose notions in religion, and by the grace of God was wonderfully recovered by reading accidentally these verses in a bible which his father had designedly left in his way. He says that he observed such a divinity in the argument, such an authority and majesty in the style, that his flesh trembled, and he was struck with such amazement that for a whole day he scarcely knew where he was or what he did; and thence he dates the beginning of his being religious. Let us enquire what there is in those strong lines. The evangelist here lays down the great truth he is to prove, that Jesus Christ is God, one with the Father. Observe,

1. Of whom he speaks—*The Word*—ὁ λόγος. This is an idiom peculiar to John's writings. See 1 John i. 1; v. 7; Rev. xix. 13. Yet some think that Christ is meant by *the Word* in Acts xx. 32; Heb. iv. 12; Luke i. 2. The Chaldee paraphrase very frequently calls the Messiah *Memra*—*the Word of Jehovah*, and speaks of many things in the Old Testament, said to be done by *the Lord*, as done by that *Word of the Lord*. Even the vulgar Jews were taught that the *Word of God* was the same with God. The evangelist, in the close of his discourse (v. 18), plainly tells us why he calls Christ *the Word*—*because he is the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and has declared him*. *Word* is two-fold: λόγος ἐνδιάθετος—*word conceived*; and λόγος προφορικός—*word uttered*. The λόγος ὁ ἔσω and ὁ ἔξω, *ratio* and *oratio*—*intelligence* and *utterance*. 1. There is the *word conceived*, that is, *thought*, which is the first and only immediate product and conception of the soul (all the operations of which are performed by *thought*), and it is one with the soul. And thus the second person in the Trinity is fitly called *the Word*; for he is the *first-begotten of the Father*, that eternal essential Wisdom which the *Lord possessed*, as the soul does its thought, *in the beginning of his way*, Prov. viii. 22. There is nothing we are more sure of than *that we think*, yet nothing we are more in the dark about than *how we think*; who can declare the generation of *thought* in the soul? Surely then the generations and births of the eternal mind may well be allowed to be great mysteries of godliness, the bottom of which we cannot fathom, while yet we adore the depth. 2. There is the *word uttered*, and this is *speech*, the chief and most natural indication of the mind. And thus Christ is *the Word*, for by him God has in *these last days spoken to us* (Heb. i. 2), and has directed us to hear him, Matt. xvii. 5. He has made known God's mind to us, as a man's word or speech makes known his thoughts, as far as he pleases, and no further. Christ is called that *wonderful speaker* (see notes on Dan. viii. 13), the *speaker of things hidden and strange*. He is *the Word speaking from God to us, and to God for us*. John Baptist was *the voice*, but Christ *the Word*:

being *the Word*, he is *the Truth*, the *Amen*, the *faithful Witness* of the mind of God.

II. What he saith of him, enough to prove beyond contradiction that *he is God*. He asserts,

1. His existence in the beginning: *In the beginning was the Word*. This bespeaks his existence, not only before his incarnation, but before all time. The beginning of time, in which all creatures were produced and brought into being, found this eternal Word in being. The world was *from* the beginning, but the Word was *in* the beginning. Eternity is usually expressed by being *before the foundation of the world*. The eternity of God is so described (Ps. xc. 2), *Before the mountains were brought forth*. So Prov. viii. 23. The Word had a being before the world had a beginning. He that *was* in the beginning *never began*, and therefore was *ever*, ἀρχαῖος—*without beginning of time*. So Nonnus.

2. His co-existence with the Father: *The Word was with God, and the Word was God*. Let none say that when we invite them to Christ we would draw them from God, for Christ is *with God* and *is God*; it is repeated in v. 2: *the same*, the very same that we believe in and preach, *was in the beginning with God*, that is, he was so from eternity. In the beginning the world was *from God*, as it was created by him; but the Word was *with God*, as ever with him. The Word was with God, (1.) In respect of *essence and substance*; for *the Word was God*: a distinct person or substance, for he was *with God*; and yet the same in substance, for he *was God*, Heb. i. 3. (2.) In respect of *complacency and felicity*. There was a glory and happiness which Christ had *with God* before the world was (ch. xvii. 5), the Son infinitely happy in the enjoyment of his Father's bosom, and no less the Father's delight, the Son of his love, Prov. viii. 30. (3.) In respect of *counsel and design*. The mystery of man's redemption by this Word incarnate was *hid in God* before all worlds, Eph. iii. 9. He that undertook to *bring us to God* (1 Pet. iii. 18) was himself from eternity *with God*; so that this grand affair of man's reconciliation to God was concerted between the Father and Son from eternity, and they understand one another perfectly well in it, Zech. vi. 13; Matt. xi. 27. He was *by him as one brought up with him* for this service, Prov. viii. 30. He was *with God*, and therefore is said to *come forth from the Father*.

3. His agency in making the world, v. 3. This is here, (1.) Expressly asserted: *All things were made by him*. He was *with God*, not only so as to be acquainted with the divine counsels from eternity, but to be *active* in the divine operations in the beginning of time. *Then was I by him*, Prov. viii. 30. God made the world *by a word* (Ps. xxxiii. 6) and Christ was *that Word*. By him, not as a subordinate instrument, but as a co-ordinate agent, God *made the world* (Heb. i. 2), not as the workman cuts by his axe, but as the

body sees by the eye. (2.) The contrary is denied: *Without him was not any thing made that was made*, from the highest angel to the meanest worm. God the Father did nothing without him in that work. Now, [1.] This proves that *he is God*; for he that *built all things is God*, Heb. iii. 4. The God of Israel often proved himself to be God with this, that he *made all things*: Isa. xl. 12, 28; xli. 4; and see Jer. x. 11, 12. [2.] This proves the excellency of the Christian religion, that the author and founder of it is the same that was the author and founder of the world. How excellent must that constitution needs be which derives its institution from him who is the fountain of all excellency! When we worship Christ, we worship him to whom the patriarchs gave honour as the Creator of the world, and on whom all creatures depend. [3.] This shows how well qualified he was for the work of our redemption and salvation. Help was laid upon one that was mighty indeed; for it was laid upon him that made all things; and he is appointed the author of our bliss who was the author of our being.

4. The original of life and light that is in him: *In him was life*, v. 4. This further proves that he is God, and every way qualified for his undertaking; for, (1.) He has *life in himself*; not only the *true God*, but the *living God*. God is life; he swears by himself when he saith, *As I live*. (2.) All living creatures have their life in him; not only all the *matter* of the creation was *made* by him, but all the *life* too that is in the creation is derived from him and supported by him. It was the Word of God that produced the *moving creatures that had life*, Gen. i. 20; Acts xvii. 25. He is that Word by which man lives more than by bread, Matt. iv. 4. (3.) Reasonable creatures have their *light* from him; that *life* which is the *light of men* comes from him. Life in man is something greater and nobler than it is in other creatures; it is *rational*, and not merely *animal*. When man became a *living soul*, his life was *light*, his capacities such as distinguished him from, and dignified him above, the beasts that perish. The *spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*, and it was the eternal Word that lighted this candle. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense, is derived from him, and depends upon him. This proves him fit to undertake our salvation; for life and light, spiritual and eternal life and light, are the two great things that fallen man, who lies so much under the power of *death* and *darkness*, has need of. From whom may we better expect the light of divine revelation than from him who gave us the light of human reason? And if, when God gave us natural life, that life was in his Son, how readily should we receive the gospel-record, that he hath given us *eternal life*, and *that life too is in his Son*!

5. The manifestation of him to the children of men. It might be objected, If this

eternal Word was all in all thus in the creation of the world, whence is it that he has been so little taken notice of and regarded? To this he answers (v. 5), *The light shines, but the darkness comprehends it not*. Observe,

(1.) The discovery of the eternal Word to the lapsed world, even before he was manifested in the flesh: *The light shineth in darkness*. Light is self-evidencing, and will make itself known; this light, whence the light of men comes, hath shone, and doth shine.

[1.] The eternal Word, *as God*, shines in the *darkness of natural conscience*. Though men by the fall are become *darkness*, yet that which may be known of God is manifested in them; see Rom. i. 19, 20. The light of nature is this light shining in darkness. Something of the power of the divine Word, both as *creating* and as *commanding*, all mankind have an innate sense of; were it not for this, earth would be a hell, a place of *utter darkness*; blessed be God, it is not so yet. [2.] The eternal Word, as Mediator, shone in the darkness of the Old-Testament types and figures, and the prophecies and promises which were of the Messiah from the beginning. He that had commanded the light of this world to shine out of darkness was himself long a light *shining in darkness*; there was a *veil* upon this *light*, 2 Cor. iii. 13.

(2.) The disability of the degenerate world to receive this discovery: *The darkness comprehended it not*; the most of men received the grace of God in these discoveries in vain.

[1.] The world of mankind *comprehended not* the natural light that was in their understandings, but became *vain in their imaginations* concerning the eternal God and the eternal Word, Rom. i. 21, 28. The darkness of error and sin overpowered and quite eclipsed this light. God *spoke once, yea twice*, but man *perceived it not*, Job xxxiii. 14. [2.] The Jews, who had the light of the Old Testament, yet comprehended not Christ in it. As there was a veil upon Moses's face, so there was upon the people's hearts. In the *darkness* of the types and shadows the light shone; but such was the *darkness* of their understandings that they could not see it. It was therefore requisite that Christ should come, both to rectify the errors of the Gentile world and to improve the truths of the Jewish church.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.



11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father,) full of grace and truth.

The evangelist designs to bring in John Baptist bearing an honourable testimony to Jesus Christ. Now in these verses, before he does this,

1. He gives us some account of the witness he is about to produce. His name was *John*, which signifies *gracious*; his conversation was austere, but he was not the less *gracious*. Now,

1. We are here told concerning him, in general, that he was a *man sent of God*. The evangelist had said concerning Jesus Christ that he was *with God* and that he was *God*; but here concerning John that he was a *man*, a mere man. God is pleased to speak to us by men like ourselves. John was a *great man*, but he was a man, a son of man; he was *sent from God*, he was God's messenger, so he is called, Mal. iii. 1. God gave him both his mission and his message, both his credentials and his instructions. John wrought no miracle, nor do we find that he had visions and revelations; but the strictness and purity of his life and doctrine, and the direct tendency of both to reform the world, and to revive the interests of God's kingdom among men, were plain indications that he was *sent of God*.

2. We are here told what his office and business were (v. 7): *The same came for a witness*, an eye-witness, a leading witness. He came *εὐαγγελιστὴν*—for a testimony. The legal institutions had been long a testimony for God in the Jewish church. By them revealed religion was kept up; hence we read of the *tabernacle of the testimony*, the *ark of the testimony*, the *law and the testimony*: but now divine revelation is to be turned into another channel; now the testimony of Christ is the testimony of God, 1 Cor. i. 6; ii. 1. Among the Gentiles, God indeed had not left himself without witness (Acts xiv. 17), but the Redeemer had no testimonies borne him among them. There was a profound silence concerning him, till John Baptist came for a witness to him. Now observe, (1.) The matter of his testimony: *He came to bear witness to the light*. Light is a thing which witnesses for itself, and carries its own evidence along with it; but to those who shut their eyes against the light it is necessary there should be those that bear witness to it. Christ's light needs not man's testimony, but the world's

darkness does. John was like the night watchman that goes round the town, proclaiming the approach of the morning light to those that have closed their eyes, and are not willing themselves to observe it; or like that watchman that was set to tell those who asked him what of the night that *the morning comes*, and, *if you will enquire, enquire ye*, Isa. xxi. 11, 12. He was sent of God to tell the world that the long-looked-for Messiah was now come, who should be a *light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel*; and to proclaim that dispensation at hand which would bring life and immortality to light. (2.) The design of his testimony: *That all men through him might believe*; not in him, but in Christ, whose way he was sent to prepare. He taught men to look through him, and pass through him, to Christ; through the doctrine of repentance for sin to that of faith in Christ. He prepared men for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel, by awakening them to a sight and sense of sin; and that, their eyes being thereby opened, they might be ready to admit those beams of divine light which, in the person and doctrine of the Messiah, were now ready to shine in their faces. If they would but receive this witness of man, they would soon find that the witness of God was greater, 1 John v. 9. See ch. x. 41. Observe, it was designed that all men through him might believe, excluding none from the kind and beneficial influences of his ministry that did not exclude themselves, as multitudes did, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and so received the grace of God in vain.

3. We are here cautioned not to mistake him for the light who only came to bear witness to it (v. 8): *He was not that light* that was expected and promised, but only was sent to bear witness of that great and ruling light. He was a star, like that which guided the wise men to Christ, a morning star; but he was not the Sun; not the Bridegroom, but a friend of the Bridegroom; not the Prince, but his harbinger. There were those who rested in John's baptism, and looked no further, as those Ephesians, Acts xix. 3. To rectify this mistake, the evangelist here, when he speaks very honourably of him, yet shows that he must give place to Christ. He was great as the prophet of the Highest, but not the Highest himself. Note, We must take heed of over-valuing ministers, as well as of under-valuing them; they are not our lords, nor have they dominion over our faith, but ministers by whom we believe, stewards of our Lord's house. We must not give up ourselves by an implicit faith to their conduct, for they are not that light; but we must attend to, and receive, their testimony; for they are sent to bear witness of that light; so then let us esteem them, and not otherwise. Had John pretended to be that light he had not been so much as a faithful witness of that light. Those who usurp the honour of Christ



forfeit the honour of being the servants of Christ; yet John was very serviceable as a witness to the light, though he was not that light. Those may be of great use to us who yet shine with a borrowed light.

II. Before he goes on with John's testimony, he returns to give us a further account of this Jesus to whom John bore record. Having shown in the beginning of the chapter the glories of his Godhead, he here comes to show the graces of his incarnation, and his favours to man as Mediator.

1. Christ was the *true Light* (v. 9); not as if John Baptist were a false light, but, in comparison with Christ, he was a very small light. Christ is the great light that deserves to be called so. Other lights are but figuratively and equivocally called so: Christ is the true light. The fountain of all knowledge and of all comfort must needs be the true light. He is the true light, for proof of which we are not referred to the emanations of his glory in the invisible world (the beams with which he enlightens that), but to those rays of his light which are darted downwards, and with which this dark world of ours is enlightened. But how does Christ enlighten every man that comes into the world? (1.) By his creating power he enlightens every man with the light of reason; that life which is the light of men is from him; all the discoveries and directions of reason, all the comfort it gives us, and all the beauty it puts upon us, are from Christ. (2.) By the publication of his gospel to all nations he does in effect enlighten every man. John Baptist was a light, but he enlightened only Jerusalem and Judea, and the region round about Jordan, like a candle that enlightens one room; but Christ is the true light, for he is a light to enlighten the Gentiles. His everlasting gospel is to be preached to every nation and language, Rev. xiv. 6. Like the sun which enlightens every man that will open his eyes, and receive its light (Ps. xix. 6), to which the preaching of the gospel is compared. See Rom. x. 18. Divine revelation is not now to be confined, as it had been, to one people, but to be diffused to all people, Matt. v. 15. (3.) By the operation of his Spirit and grace he enlightens all those that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by him perish in darkness. *The light of the knowledge of the glory of God* is said to be *in the face of Jesus Christ*, and is compared with that light which was at the beginning commanded to shine out of darkness, and which enlightens every man that comes into the world. Whatever light any man has, he is indebted to Christ for it, whether it be natural or supernatural.

2. Christ was *in the world*, v. 10. He was in the world, as the essential Word, before his incarnation, upholding all things; but this speaks of his being in the world when he took our nature upon him, and dwelt among us; see ch. xvi. 28. *I am come into*

*the world*. The Son of the Highest was here in this *lower world*; that *light* in this *dark world*; that *holy thing* in this sinful polluted world. He left a world of bliss and glory, and was here in this melancholy miserable world. He undertook to reconcile the world to God, and therefore was *in the world*, to treat about it, and settle that affair; to satisfy God's justice for the world, and discover God's favour to the world. He was in the world, but not of it, and speaks with an air of triumph when he can say, *Now I am no more in it*, ch. xvii. 11. The greatest honour that ever was put upon this world, which is so mean and inconsiderable a part of the universe, was that the Son of God was once *in the world*; and, as it should engage our affections to things above that there Christ is, so it should reconcile us to our present abode in *this world* that once Christ was *here*. He *was* in the world for awhile, but it is spoken of as a thing past; and so it will be said of us shortly, *We were* in the world. O that when we are here no more we may be where Christ is! Now observe here, (1.) What reason Christ had to expect the most affectionate and respectful welcome possible in this world; for *the world was made by him*. Therefore he came to save a lost world because it was a world of his own making. Why should he not concern himself to revive the light that was of his own kindling, to restore a life of his own infusing, and to renew the image that was originally of his own impressing? The world was *made by him*, and therefore ought to do him homage. (2.) What cold entertainment he met with, notwithstanding: *The world knew him not*. The great Maker, Ruler, and Redeemer of the world was in it, and few or none of the inhabitants of the world were aware of it. *The ox knows his owner*, but the more brutish world did not. They did not own him, did not bid him welcome, because they did not *know him*; and they did not know him because he did not make himself known in the way that they expected—in external glory and majesty. His kingdom came not *with observation*, because it was to be a kingdom of trial and probation. When he shall come as a Judge the world shall *know him*.

3. He came to *his own* (v. 11); not only to the world, which was *his own*, but to the people of Israel, that were peculiarly *his own* above all people; of them he came, among them he lived, and to them he was *first sent*. The Jews were at this time a mean despicable people; *the crown was fallen from their head*; yet, in remembrance of the ancient covenant, bad as they were, and poor as they were, Christ was not ashamed to look upon them as his own. *Tà ἴδια*—his own things; not *τοὺς ἰδίους*—his own persons, as true believers are called, ch. xiii. 1. The Jews were *his*, as a man's house, and lands, and goods are *his*, which he uses and possesses; but believers are his as a man's wife and children



are his own, which he loves and enjoys. He came to his own, to seek and save them, because they were *his own*. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, for it was he whose own the sheep were. Now observe,

(1.) That the generality *rejected him*: *His own received him not*. He had reason to expect that those who were his own should have bidden him welcome, considering how great the *obligations* were which they *lay under* to him, and how fair the *opportunities* were which they had of coming to the knowledge of him. They had the oracles of God, which told them beforehand *when* and *where* to expect him, and of what tribe and family he should arise. He came among them himself, introduced with signs and wonders, and himself the greatest; and therefore it is not said of them, as it was of the world (v. 10), that they *knew him not*; but *his own*, though they could not but know him, yet *received him not*; did not receive his doctrine, did not welcome him as the Messiah, but fortified themselves against him. The *chief priests*, that were in a particular manner *his own* (for the Levites were God's tribe), were ring-leaders in this contempt put upon him. Now this was very *unjust*, because they were *his own*, and therefore he might command their respect; and it was very *unkind* and *ungrateful*, because he came to them, to seek and save them, and so to *court* their respect. Note, Many who in profession are *Christ's own*, yet do *not receive him*, because they will not part with their sins, nor have him to *reign over them*.

(2.) That yet there was a remnant who *owned him*, and were faithful to him. Though his own received him not, yet there were those that *received him* (v. 12): *But as many as received him*. Though Israel were not gathered, yet Christ was *glorious*. Though the body of that nation persisted and perished in unbelief, yet there were many of *them* that were wrought upon to submit to Christ, and many more that *were not of that fold*. Observe here,

[1.] The true Christian's *description* and *property*; and that is, that he *receives Christ*, and *believes on his name*; the latter explains the former. Note, *First*, To be a Christian indeed is to *believe on Christ's name*; it is to *assent* to the gospel discovery, and *consent* to the gospel proposal, concerning him. His name is *the Word of God*; *the King of kings*, *the Lord our righteousness*; *Jesus a Saviour*. Now to *believe* on his name is to *acknowledge* that he is what these great names bespeak him to be, and to *acquiesce* in it, that he may be so to us. *Secondly*, Believing in Christ's name is *receiving him* as a gift from God. We must receive his doctrine as true and good; receive his law as just and holy; receive his offers as kind and advantageous; and we must receive the image of his grace, and impressions of his love, as

the governing principle of our affections and actions.

[2.] The true Christian's dignity and privilege are twofold:—

*First*, The *privilege of adoption*, which takes them into the number of God's children: *To them gave he power to become the sons of God*. Hitherto, the adoption pertained to the Jews only (*Israel is my son, my first-born*); but now, by faith in Christ, Gentiles are the *children of God*, Gal. iii. 26. They have *power*, ἐξουσίαν—*authority*; for no man taketh this power to himself, but he who is *authorized* by the gospel charter. To them gave he a *right*; to them gave he this pre-eminence. *This power have all the saints*. Note, 1. It is the unspeakable privilege of all good Christians, that they are become the *children of God*. They were by nature children of wrath, children of this world. If they be the *children of God*, they become so, are made so. *Fiant, non nascuntur Christiani*—Persons are not born Christians, but made such.—Tertullian. Behold what manner of love is this, 1 John iii. 1. God calls them *his children*, they call him *Father*, and are entitled to all the privileges of children, those of their way and those of their home. 2. The privilege of adoption is entirely owing to *Jesus Christ*; he gave this power to them that believe on his name. God is his Father, and so ours; and it is by virtue of our espousals to him, and union with him, that we stand related to God as a Father. It was in Christ that we were *predestinated to the adoption*; from him we receive both the character and the Spirit of adoption, and he is the *first-born among many brethren*. The Son of God became a Son of man, that the sons and daughters of men might become the sons and daughters of God Almighty.

*Secondly*, The *privilege of regeneration* (v. 13): *Which were born*. Note, All the children of God are born again; all that are adopted are regenerated. This real change evermore attends that *relative* one. Wherever God confers the dignity of children, he creates the nature and disposition of children. Men cannot do so when they adopt. Now here we have an account of the original of this new birth. 1. Negatively. (1.) It is not *propagated* by natural generation from our parents. It is *not of blood*, nor of the *will of the flesh*, nor of *corruptible seed*, 1 Pet. i. 23. Man is called *flesh and blood*, because thence he has his original: but we do not become the children of God as we become the children of our natural parents. Note, Grace does not run in the blood, as corruption does. Man polluted *begat a son in his own likeness* (Gen. v. 3); but man sanctified and renewed does not beget a son in *that* likeness. The Jews gloried much in their parentage, and the noble blood that ran in their veins: *We are Abraham's seed*; and therefore to them *pertained the adoption* because they were born of that blood; but this



New-Testament adoption is not founded in any such natural relation. (2.) It is not *produced* by the natural power of our own will. As it is not of *blood*, nor of *the will of the flesh*, so neither is it of *the will of man*, which labours under a moral impotency of determining itself to that which is good; so that the principles of the divine life are not of our own planting, it is the grace of God that makes us willing to be *his*. Nor can human laws or writings prevail to sanctify and regenerate a soul; if they could, the new birth would be by the will of man. But, 2. Positively: it is of *God*. This new birth is owing to the word of God as the means (1 Pet. i. 23), and to the Spirit of God as the great and sole author. True believers are *born of God*, 1 John iii. 9; v. 1. And this is necessary to their adoption; for we cannot expect the *love of God* if we have not something of his *likeness*, nor claim the privileges of adoption if we be not under the power of regeneration.

4. The word was made flesh, v. 14. This expresses Christ's incarnation more clearly than what went before. By his divine presence he always *was in the world*, and by his prophets he *came to his own*. But now that the fulness of time was come he was sent forth after another manner, *made of a woman* (Gal. iv. 4); God manifested in the flesh, according to the faith and hope of holy Job; *Yet shall I see God in my flesh*, Job xix. 26. Observe here,

(1.) The *human nature of Christ* with which he was veiled; and that expressed two ways.

[1.] The word was made flesh. Forasmuch as the children, who were to become the sons of God, were *partakers of flesh and blood*, he also himself likewise took part of the same, Heb. ii. 14. The Socinians agree that Christ is both God and man, but they say that he was *man*, and was *made a God*, as Moses (Exod. vii. 1), directly contrary to John here, who saith, *Θεὸς ἦν—He was God*, but *σὰρξ ἐγένετο—He was made flesh*. Compare v. 1 with this. This intimates not only that he was really and truly man, but that he subjected himself to the miseries and calamities of the human nature. He was made *flesh*, the meanest part of man. Flesh bespeaks man *weak*, and he was crucified through *weakness*, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. *Flesh* bespeaks man *mortal and dying* (Ps. lxxviii. 39), and Christ was *put to death in the flesh* 1 Pet. i. 18. Nay, *flesh* bespeaks man *tainted with sin* (Gen. vi. 3), and Christ, though he was perfectly holy and harmless, yet appeared in the *likeness of sinful flesh* (Rom. viii. 3), and was made *sin for us*, 2 Cor. v. 21. When Adam had sinned, God said to him, *Dust thou art*; not only because made out of the dust, but because by sin he was sunk into dust. His fall did, *σωματώσιν τὴν ψύχην*, turn him as it were *all into body*, made him earthly; therefore he that was made a curse for us was made *flesh*, and *condemned sin in the flesh*, Rom. viii. 3. Wonder

at this, that the eternal Word should be made flesh, when flesh was come into such an ill name; that he who made *all things* should himself be made flesh, one of the meanest things, and submit to that from which he was at the greatest distance. The voice that ushered in the gospel cried, *All flesh is grass* (Isa. xl. 6), to make the Redeemer's love the more wonderful, who, to *redeem and save us*, was made flesh, and withered as grass; but the *Word of the Lord*, who was made flesh, *endures for ever*; when made flesh, he ceased not to be the Word of God.

[2.] He dwelt among us, here in this lower world. Having taken upon him the nature of man, he put himself into the place and condition of other men. The Word might have been made flesh, and dwelt among the angels; but, having taken a *body* of the same mould with ours, in it he came, and resided in the same world with us. He dwelt among us, us worms of the earth, us that he had no need of, us that he got nothing by, us that were *corrupt and depraved*, and revolted from God. The Lord God came and dwelt even among the rebellious, Ps. lxxviii. 18. He that had dwelt among angels, those noble and excellent beings, came and dwelt among us that are a *generation of vipers*, us *sinners*, which was worse to him than David's dwelling in Mesech and Kedar, or Ezekiel's dwelling among scorpions, or the church of Pergamus dwelling where *Satan's seat is*. When we look upon the upper world, the world of spirits, how mean and contemptible does this flesh, this body, appear, which we carry about with us, and this world in which our lot is cast, and how hard is it to a contemplative mind to be reconciled to them! But that the eternal Word was made flesh, was clothed with a body as we are, and dwelt in this world as we do, this has put an honour upon them both, and should make us willing to abide in the flesh while God has any work for us to do; for Christ dwelt in this lower world, bad as it is, till he had finished what he had to do here, *ch. xvii. 4*. He dwelt among the Jews, that the scripture might be fulfilled, *He shall dwell in the tents of Shem*, Gen. ix. 27. And see Zech. ii. 10. Though the Jews were unkind to him, yet he continued to dwell among them; though (as some of the ancient writers tell us) he was invited to better treatment by Abgarus king of Edessa, yet he removed not to any other nation. He dwelt among us. He was in the world, not as a wayfaring man that carries but for a night, but he dwelt among us, made a long residence, the original word is observable, *ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν—he dwelt among us*, he dwelt as in a *tabernacle*, which intimates, First, That he dwelt here in very mean circumstances, as shepherds that dwell in tents. He did not dwell among us as in a *palace*, but as in a *tent*; for he had not where to lay his head, and was always upon the remove. Secondly, That his state here was a *military*



state. Soldiers dwell in tents; he had long since proclaimed war with the seed of the serpent, and now he takes the field in person, sets up his standard, and pitches his tent, to prosecute this war. *Thirdly*, That his stay among us was not to be perpetual. He dwelt here as in a tent, not as at home. The patriarchs, by dwelling in tabernacles, confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth, and sought the better country, and so did Christ, leaving us an example, Heb. xiii. 13, 14. *Fourthly*, That as of old God dwelt in the tabernacle of Moses, by the shechinah between the cherubim, so now he dwells in the human nature of Christ; that is now the true shechinah, the symbol of God's peculiar presence. And we are to make all our addresses to God through Christ, and from him to receive divine oracles.

(2.) The beams of his divine glory that darted through this veil of flesh: We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The sun is still the fountain of light, though eclipsed or clouded; so Christ was still the brightness of his Father's glory, even when he dwelt among us in this lower world. And how slightly soever the Jews thought of him there were those that saw through the veil. Observe,

[1.] Who were the witnesses of this glory: we, his disciples and followers, that conversed most freely and familiarly with him; we among whom he dwelt. Other men discover their weaknesses to those that are most familiar with them, but it was not so with Christ; those that were most intimate with him saw most of his glory. As it was with his doctrine, the disciples knew the mysteries of it, while others had it under the veil of parables; so it was with his person, they saw the glory of his divinity, while others saw only the veil of his human nature. He manifested himself to them, and not unto the world. These witnesses were a competent number, twelve of them, a whole jury of witnesses; men of plainness and integrity, and far from any thing of design or intrigue.

[2.] What evidence they had of it: We saw it. They had not their evidence by report, at second hand, but were themselves eye-witnesses of those proofs on which they built their testimony that he was the Son of the living God: We saw it. The word signifies a fixed abiding sight, such as gave them an opportunity of making their observations. This apostle himself explains this: What we declare unto you of the Word of life is what we have seen with our eyes, and what we have looked upon, 1 John i. 1.

[3.] What the glory was: The glory as of the only begotten of the Father. The glory of the Word made flesh was such a glory as became the only begotten Son of God, and could not be the glory of any other. Note, First, Jesus Christ is the only begotten of the Father. Believers are the children of

God by the special favour of adoption and the special grace of regeneration. They are in a sense *ὁμοούσιος*—of a like nature (2 Pet. i. 4), and have the image of his perfections; but Christ is *ὁμοούσιος*—of the same nature, and is the express image of his person, and the Son of God by an eternal generation. Angels are sons of God, but he never said to any of them, *This day have I begotten thee*, Heb. i. 5. Secondly, He was evidently declared to be the only begotten of the Father, by that which was seen of his glory when he dwelt among us. Though he was in the form of a servant, in respect of outward circumstances, yet, in respect of graces, his form was as that of the fourth in the fiery furnace, like the Son of God. His divine glory appeared in the holiness and heavenliness of his doctrine; in his miracles, which extorted from many this acknowledgment, that he was the Son of God; in the purity, goodness, and beneficence, of his whole conversation. God's goodness is his glory, and he went about doing good; he spoke and acted in every thing as an incarnate Deity. Perhaps the evangelist had a particular regard to the glory of his transfiguration, of which he was an eye-witness; see 2 Pet. i. 16—18. God's calling him his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased, intimated that he was the only begotten of the Father; but the full proof of this was at his resurrection.

[4.] What advantage those he dwelt among had from this. He dwelt among them, full of grace and truth. In the old tabernacle wherein God dwelt was the law, in this was grace; in that were types, in this was truth. The incarnate Word was every way qualified for his undertaking as Mediator; for he was full of grace and truth, the two great things that fallen man stands in need of; and this proved him to be the Son of God as much as the divine power and majesty that appeared in him. First, He has a fulness of grace and truth for himself; he had the Spirit without measure. He was full of grace, fully acceptable to his Father, and therefore qualified to intercede for us; and full of truth, fully apprized of the things he was to reveal, and therefore fit to instruct us. He had a fulness of knowledge and a fulness of compassion. Secondly, He has a fulness of grace and truth for us. He received, that he might give, and God was well pleased in him, that he might be well pleased with us in him; and this was the truth of the legal types.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. 16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18 No man hath seen God

at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

In these verses,

I. The evangelist begins again to give us John Baptist's testimony concerning Christ, v. 15. He had said (v. 8) that he *came for a witness*; now here he tells us that he did accordingly *bear witness*. Here, Observe,

1. *How he expressed his testimony*: He *cried*, according to the prediction that he should be *the voice of one crying*. The Old-Testament prophets cried aloud, to show people their *sins*; this New-Testament prophet cried aloud, to show people their *Saviour*. This intimates, (1.) That it was an open *public* testimony, proclaimed, that all manner of persons might take notice of it, for all are concerned in it. False teachers *entice secretly*, but wisdom publishes her dictates in the chief places of concourse. (2.) That he was free and hearty in bearing this testimony. He *cried* as one that was both *well assured* of the truth to which he witnessed and *well affected* to it. He that had leaped in his *mother's womb for joy* of Christ's approach, when newly conceived, does now with a like exultation of spirit *welcome* his public appearance.

2. What his *testimony* was. He appeals to what he had said at the beginning of his ministry, when he had directed them to expect one that should *come after him*, whose forerunner he was, and never intended any other than to lead them to him, and to prepare his way. This he had given them notice of from the first. Note, It is very comfortable to a minister to have the testimony of his conscience for him that he set out in his ministry with honest principles and sincere intentions, with a single eye to the glory and honour of Christ. Now what he had then said he applies to this Jesus whom he had lately baptized, and who was so remarkably owned from heaven: *This was he of whom I spoke*. John did not tell them that there would shortly appear such a one among them, and then leave them to find him out; but in *this* he went beyond all the Old-Testament prophets that he particularly specified the person: "*This was he*, the very man I told you of, and to him all I said is to be accommodated." Now what was it he said?

(1.) He had given the preference to this Jesus: *He that comes after me*, in the time of his birth and public appearance, is preferred before me; he that *succeeds* me in preaching and making disciples is a more excellent person, upon all accounts; as the prince or peer that *comes after* is preferred before the harbinger or gentleman-usher that makes way for him. Note, Jesus Christ, who was to be called the *Son of the Highest* (Luke i. 32), was preferred before John Baptist, who was to be called only the *prophet of the Highest*, Luke i. 76. John was a minis-

ter of the New Testament, but Christ was the Mediator of the New Testament. And observe, though John was a great man, and had a great name and interest, yet he was forward to give the preference to him to whom it belonged. Note, All the ministers of Christ must prefer him and his interest before themselves and their own interests; they will make an ill account *that seek their own things, not the things of Christ*, Phil. ii. 21. He comes *after me*, and yet is *preferred before me*. Note, God dispenses his gifts according to his good pleasure, and many times crosses hands, as Jacob did, preferring the *younger* before the *elder*. Paul far outstripped those that were in Christ before him.

(2.) He here gives a good reason for it: *For he was before me*, *πρώτος μου ἦν*—*He was my first, or first to me*; he was my first Cause, my original. The *First* is one of *God's names*, Isa. xlv. 6. He is *before me*, is *my first*, [1.] In respect of *seniority*: he was *before me*, for he was before Abraham, ch. viii. 58. Nay, he was *before all things*, Col. i. 17. I am but of yesterday, he from eternity. It was but in *those days* that John Baptist came (Matt. iii. 1), but the goings forth of our Lord Jesus *were of old, from everlasting*, Mic. v. 2. This proves two natures in Christ. Christ, as man, *came after* John as to his public appearance; Christ, as God, was *before him*; and how could he otherwise be before him but by an eternal existence? [2.] In respect of supremacy; for he was *my prince*; so some princes are called the *first*; *πρώτον*, "It is he for whose sake and service I am sent: he is my Master, I am his minister and messenger."

II. He presently returns again to speak of Jesus Christ, and cannot go on with John Baptist's testimony till v. 19. The 16th verse has a manifest connection with v. 14, where the incarnate Word was said to be *full of grace and truth*. Now here he makes this the matter, not only of our adoration, but of our thankfulness, because *from that fulness* of his *we all have received*. *He received gifts for men* (Ps. lxxviii. 18), that he might *give gifts to men*, Eph. iv. 8. He was filled, that he might *fill all in all* (Eph. i. 23), might *fill our treasures*, Prov. viii. 21. He has a fountain of fulness overflowing: *We all have received*. *All we apostles*; so some. We have received the favour of this apostleship, that is *grace*; and a fitness for it, that is *truth*. Or, rather, *All we believers*; as many as received him (v. 16), received from him. Note, All true believers receive from Christ's fulness; the best and greatest saints cannot live without him, the meanest and weakest may live by him. This excludes proud boasting, that we have nothing but *we have received it*; and silences perplexing fears, that we want nothing but *we may receive it*. Let us see what it is that we have received.

1. We have received *grace for grace*. Our receivings by Christ are all summed up in



this one word, *grace*; we have received *kai χάριν*—*even grace*, so great a gift, so rich, so invaluable; we have received *no less* than *grace*; this is a gift to be spoken of with an emphasis. It is repeated, *grace for grace*; for to every stone in this building, as well as to the top-stone, we must cry, *Grace, grace*. Observe,

(1.) The blessing received. It is *grace*; the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us. God's good will works the good work, and then the good work qualifies us for further tokens of his good will. As the cistern receives water from the fulness of the fountain, the branches sap from the fulness of the root, and the air light from the fulness of the sun, so we receive *grace* from the fulness of Christ.

(2.) The manner of its reception: *Grace for grace*—*χάριν ἀντι χάριτος*. The phrase is singular, and interpreters put different senses upon it, each of which will be of use to illustrate the unsearchable riches of the *grace* of Christ. *Grace for grace* bespeaks, [1.] The *freeness* of this *grace*. It is *grace* for *grace*' sake; so *Grotius*. We receive *grace*, not for *our sakes* (be it known to us), but even so, *Father, because it seemed good in thy sight*. It is a *gift according to grace*, Rom. xii. 6. It is *grace to us* for the sake of *grace to Jesus Christ*. God was well pleased in him, and is therefore well pleased with us in him, Eph. i. 6. [2.] The *fulness* of this *grace*. *Grace for grace* is abundance of *grace*, *grace* upon *grace* (so *Camero*), one *grace* heaped upon another; as *skin for skin* is skin after skin, even all that a man has, Job ii. 4. It is a blessing poured out, that there shall not be room to receive it, *plenteous redemption*: one *grace* a pledge of more *grace*. *Joseph*—*He will add*. It is such a fulness as is called the *fulness of God* which we are filled with. We are not straitened in the *grace* of Christ, if we be not straitened in our own bosoms. [3.] The *serviceableness* of this *grace*. *Grace for grace* is *grace* for the promoting and advancing of *grace*. *Grace* to be exercised by ourselves; gracious habits for gracious acts. *Grace* to be ministered to others; gracious vouchsafements for gracious performances: *grace* is a talent to be traded with. The apostles received *grace* (Rom. i. 5; Eph. iii. 8), that they might communicate it, 1 Pet. iv. 10. [4.] The *substitution* of New-Testament *grace* in the room and stead of Old-Testament *grace*: so *Beza*. And this sense is confirmed by what follows (v. 17); for the Old Testament had *grace* in type, the New Testament has *grace* in truth. There was a *grace* under the Old Testament, the gospel was preached then (Gal. iii. 8); but that *grace* is superseded, and we have gospel *grace* instead of it, a *glory which excelleth*, 2 Cor. iii. 10. Discoveries of *grace* are now more clear, distributions of *grace* far more plentiful; this is *grace* instead of *grace*. [5.] It bespeaks the *augmentation* and *continuance*

of *grace*. *Grace for grace* is one *grace* to improve, confirm, and perfect another *grace*. We are changed into the divine image, *from glory to glory*, from one degree of glorious *grace* to another, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Those that have *true grace* have that for *more grace*, Jam. iv. 6. When God gives *grace* he saith, *Take this in part*; for he who hath promised will perform. [6.] It bespeaks the *agreeableness* and *conformity* of *grace* in the saints to the *grace* that is in Jesus Christ; so Mr. *Clark*. *Grace for grace* is *grace* in us answering to *grace* in him, as the impression upon the wax answers the seal line for line. The *grace* we receive from Christ changes us into the same image (2 Cor. iii. 18), the image of the Son (Rom. viii. 29), the image of the heavenly, 1 Cor. xv. 49.

2. We have received *grace and truth*, v. 17. He had said (v. 14) that Christ was full of *grace and truth*; now here he says that by him *grace and truth* came to us. From Christ we receive *grace*; this is a string he delights to harp upon, he cannot go off from it. Two things he further observes in this verse concerning this *grace*:—(1.) Its preference above the law of Moses: *The law was given by Moses*, and it was a glorious discovery, both of God's will concerning man and his good will to man; but the gospel of Christ is a much clearer discovery both of duty and happiness. That which was given by Moses was purely terrifying and threatening, and bound with penalties, a law which could not give life, which was given with abundance of terror (Heb. xii. 18); but that which is given by Jesus Christ is of another nature; it has all the beneficial uses of the law, but not the terror, for it is *grace*: *grace teaching* (Tit. ii. 11), *grace reigning*, Rom. v. 21. It is a law, but a remedial law. The endearments of love are the genius of the gospel, not the affrightments of law and the curse. (2.) Its connection with truth: *grace and truth*. In the gospel we have the discovery of the greatest truths to be embraced by the understanding, as well as of the richest *grace* to be embraced by the will and affections. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance; that is, it is *grace and truth*. The offers of *grace* are sincere, and what we may venture our souls upon; they are made in earnest, for it is *grace and truth*. It is *grace and truth* with reference to the law that was given by Moses. For it is, [1.] The performance of all the Old-Testament promises. In the Old Testament we often find *mercy and truth* put together, that is, *mercy* according to promise; so here *grace and truth* denote *grace* according to promise. See Luke i. 72; 1 Kings viii. 56. [2.] It is the substance of all the Old-Testament types and shadows. Something of *grace* there was both in the ordinances that were instituted for Israel and the providences that occurred concerning Israel; but they were only shadows of good things to come, even of the *grace* that is to



be brought to us by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He is the true paschal lamb, the true scape-goat, the true manna. They had grace in the picture; we have grace in the person, that is, *grace and truth*. Grace and truth came, *ἐγένετο*—was made; the same word that was used (v. 3) concerning Christ's making all things. The law was only made known by Moses, but the being of this grace and truth, as well as the discovery of them, is owing to Jesus Christ; this was made by him, as the world at first was; and by him this *grace and truth* do consist.

3. Another thing we receive from Christ is a clear revelation of God to us (v. 18): He hath declared God to us, whom *no man hath seen at any time*. This was the grace and truth which came by Christ, the knowledge of God and an acquaintance with him. Observe,

(1.) The insufficiency of all other discoveries: *No man hath seen God at any time*. This intimates, [1.] That the nature of God being spiritual, he is invisible to bodily eyes, he is a being whom *no man hath seen, nor can see*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. We have therefore need to live by faith, by which we see him that is invisible, Heb. xi. 27. [2.] That the revelation which God made of himself in the Old Testament was very short and imperfect, in comparison with that which he has made by Christ: *No man hath seen God at any time*; that is, what was seen and known of God before the incarnation of Christ was nothing to that which is now seen and known; life and immortality are now brought to a much clearer light than they were then. [3.] That none of the Old-Testament prophets were so well qualified to make known the mind and will of God to the children of men as our Lord Jesus was, for none of them had seen God at any time. Moses beheld the similitude of the Lord (Num. xii. 8), but was told that he could not see his face, Exod. xxxiii. 20. But this recommends Christ's holy religion to us that it was founded by one that had seen God, and knew more of his mind than any one else ever did.

(2.) The all-sufficiency of the gospel discovery proved from its author: *The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him*. Observe here,

[1.] How fit he was to make this discovery, and every way qualified for it. He and he alone was worthy to take the book, and to open the seals, Rev. v. 9. For, First, He is the only-begotten Son; and who so likely to know the Father as the Son? or in whom is the Father better known than in the Son? Matt. xi. 27. He is of the same nature with the Father, so that he who hath seen him hath seen the Father, ch. xiv. 9. The servant is not supposed to know so well what his Lord does as the Son, ch. xv. 15. Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ as a Son. Secondly, He is in the bosom of the Father. He had lain in his bosom from eternity.

When he was here upon earth, yet still, as God, he was in the bosom of the Father, and thither he returned when he ascended. In the bosom of the Father; that is, 1. In the bosom of his special love, dear to him, in whom he was well pleased, always his delight. All God's saints are in his hand, but his Son was in his bosom, one in nature and essence, and therefore in the highest degree one in love. 2. In the bosom of his secret counsels. As there was a mutual complacency, so there was a mutual consciousness, between the Father and Son (Matt. xi. 27); none so fit as he to make known God, for none knew his mind as he did. Our most secret counsels we are said to hide in our bosom (in pectore); Christ was privy to the bosom-counsels of the Father. The prophets sat down at his feet as scholars; Christ lay in his bosom as a friend. See Eph. iii. 11.

[2.] How free he was in making this discovery: *He hath declared*. Him is not in the original. He has declared that of God which no man had at any time seen or known; not only that which was hid of God, but that which was hid in God (Eph. iii. 9), *ἐξηγήσατο*—it signifies a plain, clear, and full discovery, not by general and doubtful hints, but by particular explications. He that runs may now read the will of God and the way of salvation. This is the grace, this the truth, that came by Jesus Christ.

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. 22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? 23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. 24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? 26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. 28 These things were

done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

We have here the testimony of John, which he delivered to the messengers who were sent from Jerusalem to examine him. Observe here,

I. Who they were that sent to him, and who they were that were sent. 1. They that sent to him were *the Jews at Jerusalem*, the great sanhedrim or high-commission court, which sat at Jerusalem, and was the representative of the Jewish church, who took cognizance of all matters relating to religion. One would think that they who were the fountains of learning, and the guides of the church, should have, by books, understood the times so well as to know that the Messiah was at hand, and therefore should presently have known him that was his forerunner, and readily embraced him; but, instead of this, they sent messengers to *cross questions* with him. Secular learning, honour, and power, seldom dispose men's minds to the reception of divine light. 2. They that were sent were, (1.) *Priests and Levites*, probably members of the council, men of learning, gravity, and authority. John Baptist was himself a priest of the seed of Aaron, and therefore it was not fit that he should be examined by any but priests. It was prophesied concerning John's ministry that it should *purify the Sons of Levi* (Mal. iii. 3), and therefore they were jealous of him and his reformation. (2.) They were *of the Pharisees*, proud, self-justiciaries, that thought they needed no repentance, and therefore could not bear one that made it his business to preach repentance.

II. On what errand they were sent; it was to enquire concerning John and *his baptism*. They did not send for John to them, probably because they *feared the people*, lest the people where John was should be provoked to rise, or lest the people where they were should be brought acquainted with him; they thought it was good to keep him at a distance. They enquire concerning him, 1. To satisfy their curiosity; as the Athenians enquired concerning Paul's doctrine, for the novelty of it, Acts xvii. 19, 20. Such a proud conceit they had of themselves that the doctrine of repentance was to them strange doctrine. 2. It was to show their authority. They thought they *looked great* when they called him to account whom all men counted as a prophet, and arraigned him at their bar. 3. It was with a design to *suppress* him and silence him if they could find any colour for it; for they were jealous of his growing interest, and his ministry agreed neither with the Mosaic dispensation which they had been long under, nor with the notions they had formed of the Messiah's kingdom.

III. What was the answer he gave them, and his account, both concerning himself and concerning his baptism, in both which he *witnessed to Christ*.

1. Concerning himself, and what he professed himself to be. They asked him, *Σὸ τίς εἶ—Thou, who art thou?* John's appearing in the world was surprising. He was in the wilderness till the day of his showing unto Israel. His spirit, his converse, his doctrine, had something in them which commanded and gained respect; but he did not, as seducers do, give out himself to be *some great one*. He was more industrious to do good than to appear great; and therefore waived saying any thing of himself till he was legally interrogated. Those speak best for Christ that say least of themselves, whose *own works* praise them, not *their own lips*. He answers their interrogatory,

(1.) *Negatively*. He was not that great one whom some took him to be. God's faithful witnesses stand more upon their guard *against undue respect* than against *unjust contempt*. Paul writes as warmly against those that overvalued him, and said, *I am of Paul*, as against those that undervalued him, and said that his bodily presence was weak; and he rent his clothes when he was called a god. [1.] John disowns himself to be *the Christ* (v. 20): *He said, I am not the Christ*, who was now expected and waited for. Note, The ministers of Christ must remember that *they are not Christ*, and therefore must not usurp his powers and prerogatives, nor assume the praises due to him only. They are not Christ, and therefore must not lord it over God's heritage, nor pretend to a dominion over the faith of Christians. They cannot create grace and peace; they cannot enlighten, convert, quicken, comfort; for they are not Christ. Observe how emphatically this is here expressed concerning John: *He confessed, and denied not, but confessed*; it denotes his vehemence and constancy in making this protestation. Note, Temptations to pride, and assuming that honour to ourselves which does not belong to us, ought to be resisted with a great deal of vigour and earnestness. When John was taken to be the Messiah, he did not connive at it with a *Si populus vult decipi, decipiat*—*If the people will be deceived, let them*; but openly and solemnly, without any ambiguities, confessed, *I am not the Christ*; *ὅτι οὐκ εἰμι ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός—I am not the Christ, not I*; another is at hand, who is he, but I am not. His disowning himself to be the Christ is called his *confessing* and not *denying* Christ. Note, Those that humble and abase themselves thereby confess Christ, and give honour to him; but those that will not deny themselves do in effect deny Christ. [2.] He disowns himself to be Elias, v. 21. The Jews expected the person of Elias to return from heaven, and to live among them, and promised themselves great things from it. Hearing of John's character, doctrine, and baptism, and observing that he appeared as one dropped from heaven, in the same part of the country from which Elijah was carried to heaven, it



is no wonder that they were ready to take him for this Elijah; but he disowned this honour too. He was indeed prophesied of under the name of Elijah (Mal. iv. 5), and he came in the *spirit and power of Elias* (Luke i. 17), and was the Elias that was to come (Matt. xi. 14); but he was not the person of Elias, not that Elias that went to heaven in the fiery chariot, as he was that met Christ in his transfiguration. He was the Elias that God had promised, not the Elias that they foolishly dreamed of. Elias did come, and *they knew him not* (Matt. xvii. 12); nor did he make himself known to them as the Elias, because they had promised themselves such an Elias as God never promised them. [3.] He disowns himself to be that prophet, or the prophet. *First*, He was not that prophet which Moses said the Lord would raise up to them of their brethren, like unto him. If they meant this, they needed not ask that question, for that prophet was no other than the Messiah, and he had said already, *I am not the Christ*. *Secondly*, He was not such a prophet as they expected and wished for, who, like Samuel and Elijah, and some other of the prophets, would interpose in public affairs, and rescue them from under the Roman yoke. *Thirdly*, He was not one of the old prophets raised from the dead, as they expected one to come before Elias, as Elias before the Messiah. *Fourthly*, Though John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, yet he had his revelation, not by dreams and visions, as the Old-Testament prophets had theirs; his commission and work were of another nature, and belonged to another dispensation. If John had said that he was Elias, and was a prophet, he might have made his words good; but ministers must, upon all occasions, express themselves with the utmost caution, both that they may not confirm people in any mistakes, and particularly that they may not give occasion to any to think of them *above what is meet*.

(2.) *Affirmatively*. The committee that was sent to examine him pressed for a positive answer (v. 22), urging the authority of those that sent them, which they expected he should pay a deference to: "*Tell us, What art thou?*" not that we may believe thee, and be baptized by thee, but that we may give an answer to those that sent us, and that it may not be said we were sent on a fool's errand." John was looked upon as a man of sincerity, and therefore they believed he would not give an evasive ambiguous answer; but would be fair and above-board, and give a plain answer to a plain question: *What sayest thou of thyself?* And he did so, *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness*. Observe,

[1.] He gives his answer in the words of scripture, to show that the scripture was fulfilled in him, and that his office was supported by a divine authority. What the scripture saith of the office of the ministry should be often thought of by those of that

high calling, who must look upon themselves as that, and that only, which the word of God makes them.

[2.] He gives in his answer in very humble, modest, self-denying expressions. He chooses to apply that scripture to himself which denotes not his dignity, but his duty and dependence, which bespeaks him little: *I am the voice*, as if he were *vox et præterea nihil*—mere voice.

[3.] He gives such an account of himself as might be profitable to them, and might excite and awaken them to hearken to him; for he *was the voice* (see Isa. xl. 3), a voice to alarm, an articulate voice to instruct Ministers are but the *voice*, the vehicle, by which God is pleased to communicate his mind. What are Paul and Apollos but messengers? Observe, *First*, He was a *human* voice. The people were prepared to receive the law by the voice of thunders, and a trumpet exceedingly loud, such as made them tremble; but they were prepared for the gospel by the voice of a man like ourselves, *a still small voice*, such as that in which God came to Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 12. *Secondly*, He was the voice of *one crying*, which denotes, 1. His *earnestness* and *importunity* in calling people to repentance; he *cried aloud*, and *did not spare*. Ministers must preach as those that are in earnest, and are themselves affected with those things with which they desire to affect others. Those words are not likely to *thaw* the hearers' hearts that freeze between the speaker's lips. 2. His *open publication* of the doctrine he preached; he was the voice of *one crying*, that all manner of persons might hear and take notice. *Doth not wisdom cry?* Prov. viii. 1. *Thirdly*, It was in the *wilderness* that this voice was crying; in a place of silence and solitude, out of the noise of the world and the hurry of its business; the more retired we are from the tumult of secular affairs the better prepared we are to hear from God. *Fourthly*, That which he cried was, *Make straight the way of the Lord*; that is, 1. He came to rectify the mistakes of people concerning the ways of God; it is certain that they are right ways, but the scribes and Pharisees, with their corrupt glosses upon the law, had made them crooked. Now John Baptist calls people to return to the original rule. 2. He came to prepare and dispose people for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel. It is an allusion to the harbingers of a prince or great man, that cry, *Make room*. Note, When God is coming towards us, we must prepare to meet him, and let the word of the Lord have *free course*. See Ps. xxiv. 7.

2. Here is his testimony concerning his baptism.

(1.) The enquiry which the committee made about it: *Why baptizest thou, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet?* v. 25. [1.] They readily apprehended baptism



to be fitly and properly used as a sacred rite or ceremony, for the Jewish church had used it with circumcision in the admission of proselytes, to signify the cleansing of them from the pollutions of their former state. That sign was made use of in the Christian church, that it might be the more passable. Christ did not affect novelty, nor should his ministers. [2.] They expected it would be used in the days of the Messiah, because it was promised that then there should be a *fountain opened* (Zech. xiii. 1), and *clean water sprinkled*, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. It is taken for granted that Christ, and Elias, and *that prophet*, would baptize, when they came to *purify a polluted world*. Divine justice drowned the old world *in its filth*, but divine grace has provided for the cleansing of this new world *from its filth*. [3.] They would therefore know by what authority John baptized. His denying himself to be Elias, or *that prophet*, subjected him to this further question, *Why baptizest thou?* Note, It is no new thing for a man's modesty to be turned against him, and improved to his prejudice; but it is better that men should take advantage of our low thoughts of ourselves, to *trample upon us*, than the devil take advantage of our high thoughts of ourselves, to *tempt us* to pride and draw us into his condemnation.

(2.) The account he gave of it, v. 26, 27.

[1.] He owned himself to be only the minister of the outward sign: "*I baptize with water*, and that is all; I am no more, and do no more, than what you see; I have no other title than *John the Baptist*; I cannot confer the spiritual grace signified by it." Paul was in care that none should think of him above what they saw him to be (2 Cor. xii. 6); so was John Baptist. Ministers must not set up for masters.

[2.] He directed them to one who was greater than himself, and would do that for them, if they pleased, which he could not do: "*I baptize with water*, and that is the utmost of my commission; I have nothing to do but by this to lead you to one that comes after me, and consign you to him." Note, The great business of Christ's ministers is to direct all people to him; we preach not ourselves, but *Christ Jesus the Lord*. John gave the same account to this committee that he had given to the people (v. 15): *This was he of whom I spoke*. John was constant and uniform in his testimony, not as a reed shaken with the wind. The sanhedrim were jealous of his interest in the people, but he is not afraid to tell them that there is one at the door that will go beyond him. *First*, He tells them of Christ's *presence among them* now at this time: *There stands one among you*, at this time, *whom you know not*. Christ stood among the common people, and was as one of them. Note, 1. Much true worth lies hid in this world; obscurity is often the lot of real excellency. Saints are God's *hid-*

*den ones*, therefore *the world knows them not*. 2. God himself is often nearer to us than we are aware of. *The Lord is in this place*, and *I knew it not*. They were gazing, in expectation of the Messiah: *Lo he is here*, or he is there, when the kingdom of God was abroad and already *among them*, Luke xvii. 21. *Secondly*, He tells them of Christ's *preference above himself*: He comes *after me*, and yet is *preferred before me*. This he had said before; he adds here, "*Whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to loose*; I am not fit to be named the same day with him; it is an honour too great for me to pretend to be in the meanest office about him," 1 Sam. xxv. 41. Those to whom Christ is precious reckon his service, even the most despised instances of it, an honour to them. See Ps. lxxxiv. 10. If so great a man as John accounted himself unworthy of the honour of being near Christ, how unworthy then should we account ourselves! Now, one would think, these chier priests and Pharisees, upon this intimation given concerning the approach of the Messiah, should presently have asked who, and where, this excellent person was; and who more likely to tell them than he who had given them this general notice? No, they did not think this any part of their business or concern; they came to molest John, not to receive any instructions from him: so that their ignorance was *wilful*; they might have known Christ, and would not.

*Lastly*, Notice is taken of the place where all this was done: *In Bethabara beyond Jordan*, v. 28. Bethabara signifies the *house of passage*; some think it was the very place where Israel passed over Jordan into the land of promise under the conduct of Joshua; there was opened the way into the gospel state by Jesus Christ. It was at a great distance from Jerusalem, beyond Jordan; probably because what he did *there* would be least offensive to the government. Amos must go prophesy in the country, not near the court; but it was sad that Jerusalem should put so far from her the things that belonged to *her peace*. He made this confession in the same place where he was *baptizing*, that all those who attended his baptism might be witnesses of it, and none might say that they knew not what to *make of him*.

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the



Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. 35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; 36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

We have in these verses an account of John's testimony concerning Jesus Christ, which he witnessed to his own disciples that followed him. As soon as ever Christ was baptized he was immediately hurried into the wilderness, to be tempted; and there he was forty days. During his absence John had continued to bear testimony to him, and to tell the people of him; but now at last he sees Jesus coming to him, returning from the wilderness of temptation. As soon as that conflict was over Christ immediately returned to John, who was preaching and baptizing. Now Christ was tempted for example and encouragement to us; and this teaches us, 1. That the hardships of a tempted state should engage us to keep close to ordinances; to go into the sanctuary of God, Ps. lxxiii. 17. Our combats with Satan should oblige us to keep close to the communion of saints: two are better than one. 2. That the honours of a victorious state must not set us above ordinances. Christ had triumphed over Satan, and been attended by angels, and yet, after all, he returns to the place where John was preaching and baptizing. As long as we are on this side heaven, whatever extraordinary visits of divine grace we may have here at any time, we must still keep close to the ordinary means of grace and comfort, and walk with God in them. Now here are two testimonies borne by John to Christ, but those two agree in one.

1. Here is his testimony to Christ on the first day that he saw him coming from the wilderness; and here four things are witnessed by him concerning Christ, when he had him before his eyes:—

1. That he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, v. 29. Let us learn here,

(1.) That Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God, which bespeaks him the great sacrifice, by which atonement is made for sin, and man reconciled to God. Of all the legal sacrifices he chooses to allude to the lambs that were offered, not only because a lamb is an emblem of meekness, and Christ must be led as a lamb to the slaughter (Isa. liii. 7), but with a

special reference, [1.] To the daily sacrifice, which was offered every morning and evening continually, and that was always a lamb (Exod. xxix. 38), which was a type of Christ, as the everlasting propitiation, whose blood continually speaks. [2.] To the paschal lamb, the blood of which, being sprinkled upon the door-posts, secured the Israelites from the stroke of the destroying angel. Christ is our passover, 1 Cor. v. 7. He is the Lamb of God; he is appointed by him (Rom. iii. 25), he was devoted to him (ch. xvii. 19), and he was accepted with him; in him he was well pleased. The lot which fell on the goat that was to be offered for a sin-offering was called the Lord's lot (Lev. xvi. 8, 9); so Christ, who was to make atonement for sin, is called the Lamb of God.

(2.) That Jesus Christ, as the Lamb of God, takes away the sin of the world. This was his undertaking; he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26. John Baptist had called people to repent of their sins, in order to the remission of them. Now here he shows how and by whom that remission was to be expected, what ground of hope we have that our sins shall be pardoned upon our repentance, though our repentance makes no satisfaction for them. This ground of hope we have—Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God. [1.] He takes away sin. He, being Mediator between God and man, takes away that which is, above any thing, offensive to the holiness of God, and destructive to the happiness of man. He came, First, To take away the guilt of sin by the merit of his death, to vacate the judgment, and reverse the attainder, which mankind lay under, by an act of indemnity, of which all penitent obedient believers may claim the benefit. Secondly, To take away the power of sin by the Spirit of his grace, so that it shall not have dominion, Rom. vi. 14. Christ, as the Lamb of God, washes us from our sins in his own blood; that is, he both justifies and sanctifies us: he takes away sin. He is ὁ ἀγνῶν—he is taking away the sin of the world, which denotes it not a single but a continued act; it is his constant work and office to take away sin, which is such a work of time that it will never be completed till time shall be no more. He is always taking away sin, by the continual intercession of his blood in heaven, and the continual influence of his grace on earth. [2.] He takes away the sin of the world; purchases pardon for all those that repent, and believe the gospel, of what country, nation, or language, soever they be. The legal sacrifices had reference only to the sins of Israel, to make atonement for them; but the Lamb of God was offered to be a propitiation for the sin of the whole world; see 1 John ii. 2. This is encouraging to our faith; if Christ takes away the sin of the world, then why not my sin? Christ levelled his force at the main body of sin's army, struck at the

root, and aimed at the overthrow, of that wickedness which the whole world lay in. God was in him reconciling the world to himself. [3.] He does this by taking it upon himself. He is the Lamb of God, that bears the sin of the world; so the margin reads it. He bore sin for us, and so bears it from us; he bore the sin of many, as the scape-goat had the sins of Israel put upon his head, Lev. xvi. 21. God could have taken away the sin by taking away the sinner, as he took away the sin of the old world; but he has found out a way of abolishing the sin, and yet sparing the sinner, by making his Son sin for us.

(3.) That it is our duty, with an eye of faith, to behold the Lamb of God thus taking away the sin of the world. See him taking away sin, and let that increase our hatred of sin, and resolutions against it. Let not us hold that fast which the Lamb of God came to take away: for Christ will either take our sins away or take us away. Let it increase our love to Christ, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, Rev. i. 5. Whatever God is pleased to take away from us, if withal he take away our sins, we have reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain.

2. That this was he of whom he had spoken before (v. 30, 31): *This is he*, this person whom I now point at, you see where he stands, *this is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man*. Observe, (1.) This honour John had above all the prophets, that, whereas they spoke of him as one that should come, he saw him already come. *This is he*. He sees him now, he sees him nigh, Num. xxiv. 17. Such a difference there is between present faith and future vision. Now we love one whom we have not seen; then we shall see him whom our souls love, shall see him, and say, *This is he of whom I said, my Christ, and my all, my beloved, and my friend*. (2.) John calls Christ a man; after me comes a man—*ἄνθρωπος*, a strong man: like the man, the branch, or the man of God's right hand. (3.) He refers to what he had himself said of him before: *This is he of whom I said*. Note, Those who have said the most honourable things of Christ will never see cause to unsay them; but the more they know him the more they are confirmed in their esteem of him. John still thinks as meanly of himself, and as highly of Christ, as ever. Though Christ appeared not in any external pomp or grandeur, yet John is not ashamed to own, *This is he whom I meant, who is preferred before me*. And it was necessary that John should thus show them the person, otherwise they could not have believed that one who made so mean a figure should be he of whom John had spoken such great things. (4.) He protests against any confederacy or combination with this Jesus: *And I knew him not*. Though there was some relation between them (Elizabeth was cousin to the virgin Mary), yet

there was no acquaintance at all between them; John had no personal knowledge of Jesus till he saw him come to his baptism. Their manner of life had been different: John had spent his time in the wilderness, in solitude; Jesus at Nazareth, in conversation. There was no correspondence, no interview between them, that the matter might appear to be wholly carried on by the direction and disposal of Heaven, and not by any design or concert of the persons themselves. And as he hereby disowns all collusion, so also all partiality and sinister regard in it; he could not be supposed to favour him as a friend, for there was no friendship or familiarity between them. Nay, as he could not be biassed to speak honourably of him because he was a stranger to him, so, really being such a stranger to him, he was not able to say any thing of him but what he received from above, to which he appeals, ch. iii. 27. Note, They who are taught believe and confess one whom they have not seen, and blessed are they who yet have believed. (5.) The great intention of John's ministry and baptism was to introduce Jesus Christ. That he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. Observe, [1.] Though John did not know Jesus by face, yet he knew that he should be made manifest. Note, We may know the certainty of that which yet we do not fully know the nature and intention of. We know that the happiness of heaven shall be made manifest to Israel, but cannot describe it. [2.] The general assurance John had that Christ should be made manifest served to carry him with diligence and resolution through his work, though he was kept in the dark concerning particulars: *Therefore am I come*. Our assurance of the reality of things, though they are unseen, is enough to quicken us to our duty. [3.] God reveals himself to his people by degrees. At first, John knew no more concerning Christ but that he should be made manifest; in confidence of that, he came baptizing, and now he is favoured with a sight of him. They who, upon God's word, believe what they do not see, shall shortly see what they now believe. [4.] The ministry of the word and sacraments is designed for no other end than to lead people to Christ, and to make him more and more manifest. [5.] Baptism with water made way for the manifesting of Christ, as it supposed our corruption and filthiness, and signified our cleansing by him who is the fountain opened.

3. That this was he upon whom the Spirit descended from heaven like a dove. For the confirming of his testimony concerning Christ, he here vouches the extraordinary appearance at his baptism, in which God himself bore witness to him. This was a considerable proof of Christ's mission. Now, to assure us of the truth of it, we are here told (v. 32—34),

(1.) That John Baptist saw it: He bore record; did not relate it as a story, but so-



lemly attested it, with all the seriousness and solemnity of *witness-bearing*. He made affidavit of it: *I saw the Spirit descending from heaven*. John could not see the *Spirit*, but he saw the dove which was a sign and representation of the Spirit. The Spirit came now upon Christ, both to *make him fit* for his work and to *make him known* to the world. Christ was notified, not by the descent of a crown upon him, or by a transfiguration, but by the descent of the Spirit as a dove upon him, to qualify him for his undertaking. Thus the first testimony given to the apostles was by the descent of the Spirit upon them. God's children are made manifest by their *graces*; their glories are reserved for their future state. Observe, [1.] The spirit descended *from heaven*, for every good and perfect gift is *from above*. [2.] He descended *like a dove*—an emblem of meekness, and mildness, and gentleness, which makes him *fit to teach*. The dove brought the olive-branch of peace, Gen. viii. 11. [3.] The Spirit that descended upon Christ *abode upon him*, as was foretold, Isa. xi. 2. The Spirit did not *move him at times*, as Samson (Judg. xiii. 25), but *at all times*. The Spirit was given to him *without measure*; it was his prerogative to have the Spirit always upon him, so that he could at no time be found either *unqualified* for his work himself or *unfurnished* for the supply of those that seek to him for his grace.

(2.) That he was *told to expect it*, which very much corroborates the proof. It was not John's bare conjecture, that surely he on whom he saw the Spirit descending was the Son of God; but it was an *instituted* sign given him before, by which he might certainly know it (v. 33): *I knew him not*. He insists much upon this, that he knew no more of him than other people did, otherwise than by revelation. But *he that sent me to baptize* gave me this sign, *Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, the same is he*. [1.] See here what sure grounds John went upon in his ministry and baptism, that he might proceed with all imaginable satisfaction. *First*, He did not run *without sending*: God sent him to baptize. He had a warrant from heaven for what he did. When a minister's call is clear, his comfort is sure, though his success is not always so. *Secondly*, He did not run *without speeding*; for, when he was sent to baptize with water, he was directed to one that should baptize with the Holy Ghost. Under this notion John Baptist was taught to expect Christ, as one who would give that repentance and faith which he called people to, and would carry on and complete that blessed structure of which he was now laying the foundation. Note, It is a great comfort to Christ's ministers, in their administration of the outward signs, that he whose ministers they are can confer the grace signified thereby, and so put life, and soul, and power into their ministrations; can speak to the heart what they speak to the ear, and *breathe* upon the

dry bones to which they *prophesy*. [2.] See what sure grounds he went upon in his designation of the person of the Messiah. God had before given him a sign, as he did to Samuel concerning Saul: "On whom thou shalt see the Spirit descend, *that same is he*." This not only prevented any mistakes, but gave him boldness in his testimony. When he had such assurance as this given him, he could speak with assurance. When John was told this before, his expectations could not but be very much raised; and, when the event exactly answered the prediction, his faith could not but be much confirmed: and these things are written that we may believe.

4. That he is the *Son of God*. This is the conclusion of John's testimony, that in which all the particulars centre, as the *quod erat demonstrandum*—the fact to be demonstrated (v. 34): *I saw, and bore record, that this is the Son of God*. (1.) The truth asserted is, *that this is the Son of God*. The voice from heaven proclaimed, and John subscribed to it, not only that he should baptize with the Holy Ghost by a divine authority, but that he has a divine nature. This was the peculiar Christian creed, that Jesus is the Son of God (Matt. xvi. 16), and here is the first framing of it. (2.) John's testimony to it: "*I saw, and bore record*. Not only I now bear record of it, but I did so as soon as I had seen it." Observe, [1.] What he *saw* he was forward to *bear record of*, as they, Acts iv. 20: *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen*. [2.] What he *bore record of* was what he *saw*. Christ's witnesses were eye-witnesses, and therefore the more to be credited. they did not speak by hear-say and report, 2 Pet. i. 16.

II. Here is John's testimony to Christ, the next day after, v. 35, 36. Where observe, 1. He took every opportunity that offered itself to lead people to Christ: *John stood looking upon Jesus as he walked*. It should seem, John was now retired from the multitude, and was in close conversation with two of his disciples. Note, Ministers should not only in their public preaching, but in their private converse, witness to Christ, and serve his interests. He saw Jesus *walking* at some distance, yet did not go to him himself, because he would shun every thing that might give the least colour to suspect a combination. He was *looking upon Jesus*—*ἰ-βλέψας*; he looked stedfastly, and fixed his eyes upon him. Those that would lead others to Christ must be diligent and frequent in the *contemplation* of him themselves. John had seen Christ before, but now looked upon him, 1 John i. 1. 2. He repeated the same testimony which he had given to Christ the day before, though he could have delivered some other great truth concerning him; but thus he would show that he was uniform and constant in his testimony, and consistent with himself. His doctrine was the same in private that it was in public, as Paul's was

Acts xx. 20, 21. It is good to have that repeated which we have heard, Phil. iii. 1. The doctrine of Christ's sacrifice for the taking away of the sin of the world ought especially to be insisted upon by all good ministers: Christ, the Lamb of God, *Christ and him crucified*. 3. He intended this especially for his two disciples that stood with him; he was willing to turn them over to Christ, for to this end he bore witness to Christ in their hearing that they might leave all to follow him, even that they might leave *him*. He did not reckon that he lost those disciples who went over from him to Christ, any more than the schoolmaster reckons that scholar lost whom he sends to the university. John gathered disciples, not for himself, but for Christ, to *prepare them for the Lord*, Luke i. 17. So far was he from being jealous of Christ's growing interest, that there was nothing he was more desirous of. Humble generous souls will give others their due praise without fear of diminishing themselves by it. What we have of reputation, as well as of other things, will not be the less for our giving every body his own.

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? 39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

We have here the turning over of two disciples from John to Jesus, and one of them fetching in a third, and these are the first-fruits of Christ's disciples; see how small the church was in its beginnings, and what the dawning of the day of its great things was.

1. Andrew and another with him were the two that John Baptist had directed to Christ, v. 37. Who the other was we are not told; some think that it was Thomas, comparing *ch. xxi. 2*; others that it was John himself, the penman of this gospel, whose manner it is industriously to conceal his name, *ch. xiii. 23* and *xx. 3*.

1. Here is their readiness to go over to Christ: They *heard John speak* of Christ as the *Lamb of God*, and they *followed Jesus*. Probably they had heard John say the same thing the day before, and then it had not the effect upon them which now it had; see the benefit of repetition, and of private personal converse. They heard him speak of Christ as the *Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world*, and this made them *follow him*. The strongest and most prevailing argument with a sensible awakened soul to follow Christ is that it is he, and he only, that *takes away sin*.

2. The kind notice Christ took of them, v. 38. They came behind him; but, though he had his back towards them, he was soon aware of them, and *turned, and saw them following*. Note, Christ takes early cognizance of the first motions of a soul towards him, and the first step taken in the way to heaven; see Isa. lxiv. 5; Luke xv. 20. He did not stay till they begged leave to speak with him, but spoke first. What communion there is between a soul and Christ, it is he that *begins the discourse*. He saith unto them, *What seek ye?* This was not a reprimand for their boldness in intruding into his company: he that came to *seek us* never checked any for *seeking* him; but, on the contrary, it is a kind invitation of them into his acquaintance whom he saw bashful and modest: "Come, what have you to say to me? What is your petition? What is your request?" Note, Those whose business it is to instruct people in the affairs of their souls should be humble, and mild, and easy of access, and should encourage those that apply to them. The question Christ put to them is what we should all put to ourselves when we begin to follow Christ, and take upon us the profession of his holy religion: "*What seek ye?*" What do we design and desire?" Those that *follow* Christ, and yet *seek* the world, or themselves, or the praise of men, deceive themselves. "*What seek we* in seeking Christ? Do we seek a teacher, ruler, and reconciler? In following Christ, do we seek the favour of God and eternal life?" If our eye be *single* in this, we are *full of light*.

3. Their modest enquiry concerning the place of his abode: *Rabbi, where dwellest thou?* (1.) In calling him *Rabbi*, they intimated that their design in coming to him was to be *taught by him*; *rabbi* signifies a *master*, a teaching master; the Jews called their doctors, or learned men, *rabbies*. The word comes from *rab, multus* or *magnus*, a *rabbi*, a *great man*, and one that, as we say, has *much* in him. Never was there such a *rabbi* as our Lord Jesus, such a *great one*, in whom were *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. These came to Christ to be his scholars, so must all those that apply themselves to him. John had told them that he was the *Lamb of God*; now this *Lamb* is worthy to *take the book and open the seals* as



a rabbi, Rev. v. 9. And, unless we give up ourselves to be ruled and taught by him, he will not *take away our sins*. (2.) In asking *where he dwelt*, they intimate a desire to be better acquainted with him. Christ was a stranger in this country, so that they meant where was his *inn* where he *lodged*; for there they would attend him at some seasonable time, when he should appoint, to receive instruction from him; they would not press rudely upon him, when it was not proper. Civility and good manners well become those who follow Christ. And, besides, they hoped to have more from him than they could have in a short conference now by the way. They resolved to make a business, not a by-business of conversing with Christ. Those that have had some communion with Christ cannot but desire, [1.] A *further communion* with him; they follow on to know more of him. [2.] A *fixed communion* with him; where they may sit down at his feet, and abide by his instructions. It is not enough to take a turn with Christ now and then, but we must *live with him*.

4. The courteous invitation Christ gave them to his lodgings: *He saith unto them, Come and see*. Thus should good desires towards Christ and communion with him be countenanced. (1.) He invites them to come to his lodgings: the nearer we approach to Christ, the more we see of his beauty and excellency. Deceivers maintain their interest in their followers by keeping them at a distance, but that which Christ desired to recommend him to the esteem and affections of his followers was that they would *come and see*: "*Come and see what a mean lodging I have, what poor accommodations I take up with, that you may not expect any worldly advantage by following me, as they did who made their court to the scribes and Pharisees, and called them rabbin. Come and see what you must count upon if you follow me.*" See Matt. viii. 20. (2.) He invites them to come *immediately* and without delay. They asked where he lodged, that they might wait upon him at a more convenient season; but Christ invites them *immediately to come and see*; never in better time than now. Hence learn, [1.] As to others, that it is best taking people when they are in a good mind; strike while the iron is hot. [2.] As to ourselves, that it is wisdom to embrace the present opportunities: *Now is the accepted time*, 2 Cor. vi. 2.

5. Their cheerful and (no doubt) thankful acceptance of his invitation: *They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day*. It had been greater modesty and manners than had done them good if they had refused this offer. (1.) They readily went along with him: *They came and saw where he dwelt*. Gracious souls cheerfully accept Christ's gracious invitations; as David, Ps. xxvii. 8. They enquired not how they might be accommodated with him, but would put that to the

venture, and make the best of what they found. It is good being where Christ is, wherever it be. (2.) They were so well pleased with what they found that they *abode with him that day* ("Master, it is good to be here"); and he bade them welcome. It was about the tenth hour. Some think that John reckons according to the Roman computation, and that it was about ten o'clock in the morning, and they staid with him till night; others think that John reckons as the other evangelists did, according to the Jewish computation, and that it was four o'clock in the afternoon, and they abode with him that night and the next day. Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that this next day that they spent with Christ was a sabbath-day, and, it being late, they could not get home before the sabbath. As it is our duty, wherever we are, to contrive to spend the sabbath as much as may be to our spiritual benefit and advantage, so they are blessed who, by the lively exercises of faith, love, and devotion, spend their sabbaths in communion with Christ. These are Lord's days indeed, *days of the Son of man*.

II. Andrew brought his brother Peter to Christ. If Peter had been the first-born of Christ's disciples, the papists would have made a noise with it: he did indeed afterwards come to be more eminent in gifts, but Andrew had the honour first to be acquainted with Christ, and to be the instrument of bringing Peter to him. Observe,

1. The *information* which Andrew gave to Peter, with an intimation to come to Christ.

(1.) He *found him*: *He first finds his own brother Simon*; his finding implies his seeking him. Simon came along with Andrew to attend John's ministry and baptism, and Andrew knew where to look for him. Perhaps the other disciple that was with him went out to seek some friend of his at the same time, but Andrew sped first: *He first findeth Simon*, who came only to attend on John, but has his expectations out-done; he meets with Jesus.

(2.) He told him whom they had found: *We have found the Messiah*. Observe, [1.] he speaks *humbly*; not, "I have found," assuming the honour of the discovery to himself, but "*We have*," rejoicing that he had shared with others in it. [2.] He speaks *exultingly*, and with triumph: *We have found* that pearl of great price, that true treasure; and, having found it, he proclaims it as those lepers, 2 Kings vii. 9, for he knows that he shall have never the less in Christ for others sharing. [3.] He speaks *intelligently*: *We have found the Messiah*, which was more than had yet been said. John had said, *He is the Lamb of God, and the Son of God*, which Andrew compares with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and, comparing them together, concludes that he is the Messiah promised to the fathers, for it is now that the fulness of time is come. Thus, by *making God's testi-*

monies his meditation, he speaks more clearly concerning Christ than ever his teacher had done, Ps. cix. 99.

(3.) He brought him to Jesus; would not undertake to instruct him himself, but brought him to the fountain-head, persuaded him to come to Christ and introduced him. Now this was, [1.] An instance of true love to his brother, his own brother, so he is called here, because he was very dear to him. Note, We ought with a particular concern and application to seek the spiritual welfare of those that are related to us; for their relation to us adds both to the obligation and to the opportunity of doing good to their souls. [2.] It was an effect of his day's conversation with Christ. Note, the best evidence of our profiting by the means of grace is the piety and usefulness of our conversation afterwards. Hereby it appeared that Andrew had been with Jesus that he was so full of him, that he had been in the mount, for his face shone. He knew there was enough in Christ for all; and, having tasted that he is gracious, he could not rest till those he loved had tasted it too. Note, True grace hates monopolies, and loves not to eat its morsels alone.

2. The entertainment which Jesus Christ gave to Peter, who was never the less welcome for his being influenced by his brother to come, v. 42. Observe,

(1.) Christ called him by his name: *When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona.* It should seem that Peter was utterly a stranger to Christ, and if so, [1.] It was a proof of Christ's omniscience that upon the first sight, without any enquiry, he could tell the name both of him and of his father. *The Lord knows them that are his, and their whole case.* However, [2.] It was an instance of his condescending grace and favour, that he did thus freely and affably call him by his name, though he was of mean extraction, and *vir nullius nominis—a man of no name.* It was an instance of God's favour to Moses that he *knew him by name*, Exod. xxxiii. 17. Some observe the signification of these names: *Simon—obedient, Jona—a dove.* An obedient dove-like spirit qualifies us to be the disciples of Christ.

(2.) He gave him a new name: *Cephas.* [1.] His giving him a name intimates Christ's favour to him. A new name denotes some great dignity, Rev. ii. 17; Isa. lxii. 2. \* By this Christ not only wiped off the reproach of his mean and obscure parentage, but adopted him into his family as one of his own. [2.] The name which he gave him bespeaks his fidelity to Christ: *Thou shalt be called Cephas* (that is Hebrew for a stone), which is by interpretation *Peter*; so it should be rendered, as Acts ix. 36. *Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas*; the former Hebrew, the latter Greek, for a young roe. Peter's natural temper was stiff, and hardy, and resolute, which I take to be the principal reason

why Christ called him *Cephas—a stone.* When Christ afterwards prayed for him, that his faith might not fail, that so he might be firm to Christ himself, and at the same time bade him *strengthen his brethren*, and lay out himself for the support of others, then he made him what he here called him, *Cephas—a stone.* Those that come to Christ must come with a fixed resolution to be firm and constant to him, *like a stone*, solid and steadfast; and it is by his grace that they are so. His saying, *Be thou steady*, makes them so. Now this does no more prove that Peter was the singular or only rock upon which the church is built than the calling of James and John *Boanerges* proves them the only sons of thunder, or the calling of Josias *Barnabas* proves him the only son of consolation.

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. 44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, or whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. 50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

We have here the call of Philip and Nathanael.

I. Philip was called immediately by Christ himself, not as Andrew, who was directed to Christ by John, or Peter, who was invited by his brother. God has various methods of bringing his chosen ones home to himself. But, whatever means he uses, he is not tied to



any. 1. Philip was called in a *preventing* way: *Jesus findeth Philip*. Christ sought us, and found us, before we made any enquiries after him. The name *Philip* is of Greek origin, and much used among the Gentiles, which some make an instance of the degeneracy of the Jewish church at this time, and their conformity to the nations; yet Christ changed not his name. 2. He was called the *day following*. See how closely Christ applied himself to his business. When work is to be done for God, we must not *lose a day*. Yet observe, Christ now called one or two a day; but, after the Spirit was poured out, there were thousands a day effectually called, in which was fulfilled *ch. xiv. 12*. 3. *Jesus would go forth into Galilee* to call him. Christ will find out all those that are given to him, wherever they are, and none of them shall be lost. 4. Philip was brought to be a disciple by the power of Christ going along with that word, *Follow me*. See the nature of true Christianity; it is *following Christ*, devoting ourselves to his *converse and conduct*, attending his movements, and treading in his steps. See the efficacy of the grace of Christ making the call of his word to prevail; it is the *rod of his strength*. 5. We are told that Philip was of Bethsaida, and Andrew and Peter were so too, *v. 44*. These eminent disciples received not honour from the place of their nativity, but reflected honour upon it. *Bethsaida* signifies the *house of nets*, because inhabited mostly by fishermen; thence Christ chose disciples, who were to be furnished with extraordinary gifts, and therefore needed not the ordinary advantages of learning. Bethsaida was a wicked place (*Matt. xi. 21*), yet even *there* was a remnant, according to the election of grace.

II. Nathanael was invited to Christ by Philip, and much is said concerning him. In which we may observe,

1. What passed between Philip and Nathanael, in which appears an observable mixture of pious zeal with weakness, such as is usually found in beginners, that are yet but *asking the way to Zion*. Here is,

(1.) The joyful news that Philip brought to Nathanael, *v. 45*. As Andrew before, so Philip here, having got some knowledge of Christ himself, rests not till he has *made manifest the savour of that knowledge*. Philip, though newly come to an acquaintance with Christ himself, yet steps aside to seek Nathanael. Note, When we have the fairest opportunities of getting good to our own souls, yet even then we must seek opportunities of doing good to the souls of others, remembering the words of Christ, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, *Acts xx. 35*. O, saith Philip, *we have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write*. Observe here, [1.] What a transport of joy Philip was in, upon this new acquaintance with Christ: "We have found him whom we have so often talked of, so long wished and

waited for; at last, *he is come, he is come*, and we have found him!" [2.] What an advantage it was to him that he was so well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which prepared his mind for the reception of evangelical light, and made the entrance of it much the more easy: *Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write*. What was written entirely and from eternity in the *book of the divine counsels* was in part, at sundry times and in divers manners, copied out into the book of the *divine revelations*. Glorious things were written there concerning the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, Shiloh, the prophet like Moses, the Son of David, Emmanuel, the Man, the Branch, Messiah the Prince. Philip had studied these things, and was full of them, which made him readily welcome Christ. [3.] What mistakes and weaknesses he laboured under—he called Christ *Jesus of Nazareth*, whereas he was of *Bethlehem*; and the *Son of Joseph*, whereas he was but his *supposed* Son. Young beginners in religion are subject to mistakes, which time and the grace of God will rectify. It was his weakness to say, *We have found him*, for Christ found them before they found Christ. He did not yet *apprehend*, as Paul did, how he was *apprehended of Christ Jesus*, *Phil. iii. 12*.

(2.) The objection which Nathanael made against this, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* *v. 46*. Here, [1.] His caution was commendable, that he did not lightly assent to every thing that was said, but took it into examination; our rule is, *Prove all things*. But, [2.] His objection arose from ignorance. If he meant that no good thing could come out of Nazareth it was owing to his ignorance of the divine grace, as if that were less affected to one place than another, or tied itself to men's foolish and ill-natured observations. If he meant that the Messiah, that great good thing, could not come out of Nazareth, so far he was right (Moses, in the law, said that he should come out of Judah, and the prophets had assigned Bethlehem for the place of his nativity); but then he was ignorant of the matter of *fact*, that this Jesus was born at Bethlehem; so that the blunder Philip made, in calling him *Jesus of Nazareth*, occasioned this objection. Note, The mistakes of preachers often give rise to the prejudices of hearers.

(3.) The short reply which Philip gave to this objection: *Come and see*. [1.] It was his *weakness* that he could not give a satisfactory answer to it; yet it is the common case of young beginners in religion. We may *know* enough to *satisfy* ourselves, and yet not be able to *say* enough to *silence* the cavils of a subtle adversary. [2.] It was his *wisdom* and *zeal* that, when he could not answer the objection himself, he would have him go to one that could: *Come and see*. Let us not stand arguing here, and raising difficulties to ourselves which we cannot get

over; let us go and converse with Christ himself, and these difficulties will all vanish presently. Note, It is folly to spend that time in doubtful disputation which might be better spent, and to much better purpose, in the exercises of piety and devotion. *Come and see*; not, *Go and see*, but, "*Come, and I will go along with thee*;" as Isa. ii. 3; Jer. i. 5. From this parley between Philip and Nathanael, we may observe, *First*, That many people are kept from the ways of religion by the unreasonable prejudices they have conceived against religion, upon the account of some foreign circumstances which do not at all touch the merits of the case. *Secondly*, The best way to remove the prejudices they have entertained against religion is to prove themselves, and make trial of it. Let us not answer this matter before we hear it.

2. What passed between Nathanael and our Lord Jesus. He came and saw, not in vain.

(1.) Our Lord Jesus bore a very honourable testimony to Nathanael's integrity: *Jesus saw him coming*, and met him with favourable encouragement; he said of him to those about him, Nathanael himself being within hearing, *Behold an Israelite indeed*. Observe,

[1.] That he commended him; not to flatter him, or puff him up with a good conceit of himself, but perhaps because he knew him to be a *modest* man, if not a *melancholy* man, one that had hard and mean thoughts of himself, was ready to doubt his own sincerity; and Christ by this testimony put the matter out of doubt. Nathanael had, more than any of the candidates, objected against Christ; but Christ hereby showed that he excused it, and was not extreme to mark what he had said amiss, because he knew his heart was upright. He did not retort upon him, *Can any good thing come out of Cana* (ch. xxi. 2), an obscure town in Galilee? But kindly gives him this character, to encourage us to hope for acceptance with Christ, notwithstanding our weakness, and to teach us to speak honourably of those who without cause have spoken slightly of us, and to give them their due praise.

[2.] That he commended him for his integrity. *First, Behold an Israelite indeed*. It is Christ's prerogative to know what men are indeed; we can but *hope the best*. The whole nation were Israelites in name, but *all are not Israel that are of Israel* (Rom. ix. 6); here, however, was an *Israelite indeed*. 1. A sincere follower of the good example of Israel, whose character it was that he was a *plain man*, in opposition to Esau's character of a *cunning man*. He was a genuine son of *honest Jacob*, not only of his *seed*, but of his *spirit*. 2. A sincere professor of the faith of Israel; he was true to the religion he professed, and lived up to it: he was really as good as he seemed, and his practice was of a *piece* with his profession. He is the Jew that is one *inwardly* (Rom. ii. 29), so is he the *Christian*. *Secondly*, He is one in whom

is *no guile*—that is the character of an Israelite indeed, a Christian indeed: *no guile* towards men; a man without trick or design; a man that one may trust; *no guile* towards God, that is, sincere in his repentance for sin; sincere in his covenanting with God: in whose spirit is *no guile*, Ps. xxxii. 2. He does not say without *guilt*, but without *guile*. Though in many things he is foolish and forgetful, yet in nothing false, nor *wickedly departing from God*: there is no allowed approved guilt in him; not painted, though he have his spots: "*Behold this Israelite indeed*." 1. "Take notice of him, that you may learn his way, and do like him." 2. "Admire him; *behold*, and *wonder*." The hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees had so leavened the Jewish church and nation, and their religion was so degenerated into formality or state-policy, that an Israelite indeed was a *man wondered at*, a miracle of divine grace, like Job, ch. i. 8.

(2.) Nathanael is much surprised at this, upon which Christ gives him a further proof of his omniscience, and a kind memorial of his former devotion.

[1.] Here is Nathanael's modesty, in that he was soon put out of countenance at the kind notice Christ was pleased to take of him: "*Whence knowest thou me*, me that am unworthy of thy cognizance? *who am I, O Lord God?*" 2 Sam. vii. 18. This was an evidence of his sincerity, that he did not catch at the praise he met with, but declined it. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves; we know not what is in a man's heart by looking in his face, but all things are naked and open before Christ, Heb. iv. 12, 13. Doth Christ know us? Let us covet to know him.

[2.] Here is Christ's further manifestation of himself to him: *Before Philip called thee, I saw thee*. *First*, He gives him to understand that he *knew him*, and so manifests his divinity. It is God's prerogative infallibly to know all persons and all things; by this Christ proved himself to be God upon many occasions. It was prophesied concerning the Messiah that he should be of *quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, that is, in judging the sincerity and degree of the fear of God in others, and that he should not *judge after the sight of his eyes*, Isa. xi. 2, 3. Here he answers that prediction. See 2 Tim. ii. 19. *Secondly*, That before Philip called him he saw him under the fig-tree; this manifests a particular kindness for him. 1. His eye was towards him before Philip called him, which was the first time that ever Nathanael was acquainted with Christ. Christ has knowledge of us before we have any knowledge of him; see Isa. xlv. 4; Gal. iv. 9. 2. His eye was upon him when he was *under the fig-tree*; this was a private token which nobody understood but Nathanael: "When thou wast retired *under the fig-tree* in thy garden, and thoughtest that no eye saw thee,



I had then my eye upon thee, and saw that which was very acceptable." It is most probable that Nathanael under the fig-tree was employed, as Isaac in the field, in meditation, and prayer, and communion with God. Perhaps then and there it was that he solemnly joined himself to the Lord in an inviolable covenant. Christ saw in secret, and by this public notice of it did in part reward him openly. *Sitting under the fig-tree* denotes quietness and composedness of spirit, which much befriended communion with God. See Mic. iv. 4; Zech. iii. 10. Nathanael herein was an Israelite indeed, that, like Israel, he *wrestled with God alone* (Gen. xxxii. 24), prayed not like the hypocrites, in the corners of the streets, but under the fig-tree.

(3.) Nathanael hereby obtained a full assurance of faith in Jesus Christ, expressed in that noble acknowledgment (v. 49): *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel*; that is, in short, thou art the true Messiah. Observe here, [1.] How *firmly* he believed *with the heart*. Though he had lately laboured under some prejudices concerning Christ, they had now all vanished. Note, The grace of God, in working faith, casts down imaginations. Now he asks no more, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* For he believes Jesus of Nazareth to be the chief good, and embraces him accordingly. [2.] How *freely* he confessed *with the mouth*. His confession is made in form of an adoration, directed to our Lord Jesus himself, which is a proper way of confessing our faith. *First*, He confesses Christ's prophetic office, in calling him *Rabbi*, a title which the Jews commonly gave to their teachers. Christ is the great rabbi, at whose feet we must all be *brought up*. *Secondly*, He confesses his divine nature and mission, in calling him the Son of God (that Son of God spoken of Ps. ii. 7); though he had but a human *form and aspect*, yet having a divine knowledge, the knowledge of the heart, and of things distant and secret, Nathanael thence concludes him to be the *Son of God*. *Thirdly*, He confesses, "*Thou art the king of Israel*"; that king of Israel whom we have been long waiting for." If he be the Son of God, he is king of the Israel of God. Nathanael hereby proves himself an Israelite indeed that he so readily owns and submits to the king of Israel.

(4.) Christ hereupon raises the hopes and expectations of Nathanael to something further and greater than all this, v. 50, 51. Christ is very tender of young converts, and will encourage good beginnings, though weak, Matt. xii. 20.

[1.] He here signifies his acceptance, and (it should seem) his admiration, of the ready faith of Nathanael: *Because I said, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou?* He wonders that such a small indication of Christ's divine knowledge should have such an effect; it was a sign that Nathanael's heart

was prepared beforehand, else the work had not been done so suddenly. Note, It is much for the honour of Christ and his grace, when the heart is surrendered to him at the first summons.

[2.] He promises him much greater helps for the confirmation and increase of his faith than he had had for the first production of it.

*First*, In general: "*Thou shalt see greater things than these*, stronger proofs of my being the Messiah;" the miracles of Christ, and his resurrection. Note, 1. To him that hath, and maketh good use of what he hath, more shall be given. 2. Those who truly believe the gospel will find its evidences grow upon them, and will see more and more cause to believe it. 3. Whatever discoveries Christ is pleased to make of himself to his people while they are here in this world, he hath still greater things than these to make known to them; a glory yet further to be revealed.

*Secondly*, In particular: "Not thou only, but you, all you my disciples, whose faith this is intended for the confirmation of, you *shall see heaven opened*;" this is more than telling Nathanael of his being under the fig-tree. This is introduced with a solemn preface, *Verily, verily I say unto you*, which commands both a *fixed attention* to what is said as very weighty, and a *full assent* to it as undoubtedly true: "I say it, whose word you may rely upon, *amen, amen*." None used this word at the beginning of a sentence but Christ, though the Jews often used it at the close of a prayer, and sometimes doubled it. It is a solemn asseveration. Christ is called the *Amen* (Rev. iii. 14), and so some take it here, *I the Amen, the Amen, say unto you*. I the faithful witness. Note, The assurances we have of the glory to be revealed are built upon the word of Christ. Now see what it is that Christ assures them of: *Hereafter, or within awhile, or ere long, or henceforth, ye shall see heaven opened*.

a. It is a mean title that Christ here takes to himself: *the Son of man*; a title frequently applied to him in the gospel, but always by himself. Nathanael had called him the *Son of God* and *king of Israel*: he calls himself *Son of man*, (a.) To express his *humility* in the midst of the honours done him. (b.) To teach his *humanity*, which is to be believed as well as his divinity. (c.) To intimate his present state of humiliation, that Nathanael might not expect this king of Israel to appear in external pomp.

b. Yet they are great things which he here foretels: *You shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man*. (a.) Some understand it literally, as pointing at some particular event. Either, [a.] There was some vision of Christ's glory, in which this was exactly fulfilled, which Nathanael was an eye-witness of, as Peter, and James, and John were of his transfiguration. There were many things which Christ did, and those in the presence

of his disciples, which were not written (*ch. xx. 30*), and why not this? Or, [*b.*] It was fulfilled in the many ministrations of the angels to our Lord Jesus, especially that at his ascension, when heaven was opened to receive him, and the angels *ascended and descended*, to attend him and to do him honour, and this in the sight of the disciples. Christ's ascension was the great proof of his mission, and much confirmed the faith of his disciples, *ch. vi. 62*. Or, [*c.*] It may refer to Christ's second coming, to judge the world, when the heavens shall be *open*, and every eye shall see him, and the angels of God shall ascend and descend about him, as attendants on him, every one employed; and a busy day it will be. See 2 *Thess. i. 10*. (*b.*) Others take it figuratively, as speaking of a state or series of things to commence *from henceforth*; and so we may understand it, [*a.*] Of Christ's *miracles*. Nathanael believed, because Christ, as the prophets of old, could tell him things secret; but what is this? Christ is now beginning a dispensation of miracles, much more great and strange than this, as if heaven were opened; and such a power shall be exerted by the Son of man as if the angels, which excel in strength, were continually attending his orders. Immediately after this, Christ began to work miracles, *ch. ii. 11*. Or, [*b.*] Of his *mediation*, and that blessed intercourse which he hath settled between heaven and earth, which his disciples should by degrees be let into the mystery of. *First*, By Christ, as Mediator, they shall see *heaven opened*, that we may *enter into the holiest* by his blood (*Heb. x. 19, 20*); heaven opened, that by faith we may *look in*, and at length may *go in*; may now behold the glory of the Lord, and hereafter enter into the joy of our Lord. And, *Secondly*, They shall see *angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man*. Through Christ we have communion with and benefit by the holy angels, and things in heaven and things on earth are *reconciled and gathered together*. Christ is to us as Jacob's ladder (*Gen. xxviii. 12*), by whom angels continually ascend and descend for the good of the saints.

## CHAP. II.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had an account of the first disciples whom Jesus called, Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael. These were the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb, *Rev. xix. 4*. Now, in this chapter, we have, 1. The account of the first miracle which Jesus wrought—turning water into wine, at Cana of Galilee (*ver. 1–11*), and his appearing at Capernaum, *ver. 12–11*. The account of the first passover he kept at Jerusalem after he began his public ministry; his driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple (*ver. 13–17*); and the sign he gave to those who quarrelled with him for it (*ver. 18–23*), with an account of some almost believers, that followed him, thereupon, for some time (*ver. 23–25*), but he knew them too well to put any confidence in them.

AND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples to the marriage. 3 And when they wanted wine, the mother

of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. 4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. 5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. 6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. 9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew); the governor of the feast called the bridegroom. 10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

We have here the story of Christ's miraculous conversion of water into wine at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. There were some few so well disposed as to believe in Christ, and to follow him, when he *did no miracle*; yet it was not likely that many should be wrought upon till he had something wherewith to answer those that asked, *What sign showest thou?* He could have wrought miracles before, could have made them the common actions of his life and the common entertainments of his friends; but, miracles being designed for the sacred and solemn seals of his doctrine, he began not to work any till he began to preach his doctrine. Now observe,

1. The occasion of this miracle. Maimonides observes it to be to the honour of Moses that all the signs he did in the wilderness he did *upon necessity*; we needed food, he brought us manna, and so did Christ. Observe,

1. The time: the *third day* after he came into Galilee. The evangelist keeps a journal of occurrences, for no day passed without something extraordinary done or said. Our Master filled up his time better than his servants do, and never lay down at night complaining, as the Roman emperor did, that he had *lost a day*.



2. The place: it was at Cana in Galilee, in the tribe of Asher (Josh. xix. 28), of which, before, it was said that *he shall yield royal dainties*, Gen. xlix. 20. Christ began to work miracles in an obscure corner of the country, remote from Jerusalem, which was the public scene of action, to show that he *sought not honour from men* (ch. v. 41), but would put honour upon the lowly. His doctrine and miracles would not be so much opposed by the plain and honest Galileans as they would be by the proud and prejudiced rabbies, politicians, and grandees, at Jerusalem.

3. The occasion itself was a *marriage*; probably one or both of the parties were akin to our Lord Jesus. The *mother of Jesus* is said to be *there*, and not to be *called*, as Jesus and his disciples were, which intimates that she was there as one at home. Observe the honour which Christ hereby put upon the ordinance of marriage, that he graced the solemnity of it, not only with his presence, but with his first miracle; because it was instituted and blessed in innocence, because by it he would still *seek a godly seed*, because it resembles the mystical union between him and his church, and because he foresaw that in the papal kingdom, while the marriage ceremony would be unduly dignified and advanced into a *sacrament*, the *married state* would be unduly vilified, as inconsistent with any sacred function. There was a *marriage*—γάμος, a *marriage-feast*, to grace the solemnity. Marriages were usually celebrated with festivals (Gen. xxix. 22; Judg. xiv. 10), in token of joy and friendly respect, and for the confirming of love.

4. Christ and his mother and disciples were principal guests at this entertainment. The *mother of Jesus* (that was her most honourable title) *was there*; no mention being made of Joseph, we conclude him dead before this. Jesus was *called*, and he came, accepted the invitation, and feasted with them, to teach us to be *respectful* to our relations, and *sociable* with them, though they be mean. Christ was to come in a way different from that of John Baptist, who came *neither eating nor drinking*, Matt. xi. 18, 19. It is the wisdom of the prudent to study how to *improve* conversation rather than how to *decline* it.

(1.) *There was a marriage, and Jesus was called.* Note, [1.] It is very desirable, when there is a *marriage*, to have Jesus Christ present at it; to have his spiritual gracious presence, to have the marriage owned and blessed by him: the *marriage* is then *honourable* indeed; and they that *marry* in the Lord (1 Cor. vii. 39) do not marry *without* him. [2.] They that would have Christ with them at their marriage must invite him by prayer; that is the messenger that must be sent to heaven for him; and he will come: *Thou shalt call, and I will answer.* And he will turn the water into wine.

(2.) The disciples also were invited, those

five whom he had called (ch. 1.), for as yet he had no more; they were his family, and were invited with him. They had thrown themselves upon his care, and they soon found that, though he had no wealth, he had good friends. Note, [1.] Those that *follow* Christ shall *feast* with him, they shall *fare* as he *fares*, so he has *bespoken* for them (ch. xii. 26): *Where I am, there shall my servant be also.* [2.] Love to Christ is testified by a love to those that are his, for his sake; *our goodness extendeth not to him, but to the saints.* Calvin observes how *generous* the maker of the feast was, though he seems to have been but of small substance, to invite four or five strangers more than he thought of, because they were followers of Christ, which shows, saith he, that there is more of freedom, and liberality, and true friendship, in the conversation of some meaner persons than among many of higher rank.

II. The miracle itself. In which observe,

1. *They wanted wine*, v. 3. (1.) There was *want* at a *feast*; though much was provided, yet all was spent. While we are in this world we sometimes find ourselves in *straits*, even then when we think ourselves in the *fulness of our sufficiency*. If always *spending* perhaps all is spent ere we are aware. (2) There was *want* at a *marriage feast*. Note, They who, being *married*, are come to *care for the things of the world* must expect *trouble in the flesh*, and count upon disappointment. (3.) It should seem, Christ and his disciples were the occasion of this want, because there was more company than was expected when the provision was made; but they who straiten themselves for Christ shall not lose by him.

2. The *mother of Jesus* solicited him to assist her friends in this strait. We are told (v. 3—5) what passed between Christ and his mother upon this occasion.

(1.) She acquaints him with the difficulty they were in (v. 3): *She saith unto him, They have no wine.* Some think that she did not expect from him any miraculous supply (he having as yet wrought no miracle), but that she would have him make some *decent* excuse to the company, and make the best of it, to save the bridegroom's reputation, and keep him in countenance; or (as Calvin suggests) would have him make up the want of wine with some holy profitable discourse. But, most probably, she looked for a miracle; for she knew he was now appearing as the great prophet, like unto Moses, who so often seasonably supplied the wants of Israel; and, though this was his first public miracle, perhaps he had sometimes relieved her and her husband in their low estate. The bridegroom might have sent out for more wine, but she was for going to the fountain-head. Note, [1.] We ought to be concerned for the wants and straits of our friends, and not *seek our own things* only. [2.] In our own and our friends' straits it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to Christ by prayer. [3.] In

our addresses to Christ, we must not prescribe to him, but humbly spread our case before him, and then *refer ourselves* to him to do as he pleases.

(2.) He gave her a reprimand for it, for he saw more amiss in it than we do, else he had not treated it thus.—Here is,

[1.] The rebuke itself: *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* As many as Christ loves, he rebukes and chastens. He calls her *woman*, not *mother*. When we begin to be assuming, we should be reminded what we are, *men* and *women*, frail, foolish, and corrupt. The question, *τί ἐγὼ καὶ σοί*, might be read, *What is that to me and thee?* What is it to us if they do want? But it is always used as we render it, *What have I to do with thee?* as Judges xi. 12; 2 Sam. xvi. 10; Ezra iv. 3; Matt. viii. 29. It therefore bespeaks a resentment, yet not at all inconsistent with the reverence and subjection which he paid to his mother, according to the fifth commandment (Luke ii. 51); for there was a time when it was Levi's praise that he said to his father, *I have not known him*, Deut. xxxiii. 9. Now this was intended to be, *First*, A check to his mother for interposing in a matter which was the act of his Godhead, which had no dependence on her, and which she was not the mother of. Though, as man, he was David's Son and hers; yet, as God, he was David's Lord and hers, and he would have her know it. The greatest advancements must not make us forget ourselves and our place, nor the familiarity to which the covenant of grace admits us breed contempt, irreverence, or any kind or degree of presumption. *Secondly*, It was an instruction to others of his relations (many of whom were present here) that they must never expect him to have any regard to his kindred according to the flesh, in his working miracles, or that therein he should gratify them, who in this matter were no more to him than other people. In the things of God we must not *know faces*. *Thirdly*, It is a standing testimony against that idolatry which he foresaw his church would in after-ages sink into, in giving undue honours to the virgin Mary, a crime which the Roman catholics, as they call themselves, are notoriously guilty of, when they call her the *queen of heaven*, the *salvation of the world*, their *mediatrix*, their *life and hope*; not only depending upon her merit and intercession, but beseeching her to *command her Son* to do them good: *Monstra te esse matrem—Show that thou art his mother. Jussu matris impera salvatori—Lay thy maternal commands on the Saviour*. Does he not here expressly say, when a miracle was to be wrought, even in the days of his humiliation, and his mother did but tacitly hint an intercession, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* This was plainly designed either to *prevent* or *aggravate* such gross idolatry, such horrid blasphemy. The Son of God is appointed our Advocate with the Father; but the mother of our Lord was

never designed to be our advocate with the Son.

[2.] The reason of this rebuke: *Mine hour is not yet come*. For every thing Christ did, and that was done to him, he had *his hour*, the *fixed* time and the *fittest* time, which was punctually observed. *First*, "Mine hour for working miracles is not yet come." Yet afterwards he wrought this, before the hour, because he foresaw it would confirm the faith of his infant disciples (v. 11), which was the end of all his miracles: so that this was an earnest of the many miracles he would work when his hour was come. *Secondly*, "Mine hour of working miracles openly is not yet come; therefore do not talk of it thus publicly." *Thirdly*, "Is not the hour of my exemption from thy authority yet come, now that I have begun to act as a prophet?" So Gregory Nyssen. *Fourthly*, "Mine hour for working this miracle is not yet come." His mother moved him to help them when the wine began to fail (so it may be read, v. 3), but his hour was not yet come till it was quite spent, and there was a *total want*; not only to prevent any suspicion of mixing some of the wine that was left with the water, but to teach us that man's extremity is God's opportunity to appear for the help and relief of his people. Then *his hour is come* when we are reduced to the utmost strait, and know not what to do. This encouraged those that waited for him to believe that though his hour was not yet come it would come. Note, The delays of mercy are not to be construed the denials of prayer. *At the end it shall speak*.

(3.) Notwithstanding this, she encouraged herself with expectations that he would help her friends in this strait, for she bade the servants *observe his orders*, v. 5. [1.] She took the reproof very submissively, and did not reply to it. It is best not to deserve reproof from Christ, but next best to be meek and quiet under it, and to count it a kindness, Ps. cxli. 5. [2.] She kept her hope in Christ's mercy, that he would yet grant her desire. When we come to God in Christ for any mercy, two things discourage us:—*First*, Sense of *our own follies* and infirmities. "Surely such imperfect prayers as ours cannot speed." *Secondly*, Sense of *our Lord's frowns and rebukes*. Afflictions are continued, deliverances delayed, and God seems angry at our prayers. This was the case of the mother of our Lord here, and yet she encourages herself with hope that he will at length give in an answer of peace, to teach us to wrestle with God by faith and fervency in prayer, even when he seems in his providence to walk contrary to us. We must *against hope believe in hope*, Rom. iv. 18. [3.] She directed the servants to have an eye to him immediately, and not to make their applications to her, as it is probable *they had done*. She quits all pretensions to an *influence* upon him, or *intercession* with him; let their souls



wait only on him, Ps. lxii. 5. [4.] She directed them punctually to observe his orders, without disputing, or asking questions. Being conscious to herself of a fault in *prescribing* to him, she cautions the servants to take heed of the same fault, and to attend both his time and his way for supply: "*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*, though you may think it ever so improper. If he saith, Give the guests water, when they call for wine, do it. If he saith, Pour out from the bottoms of the vessels that are spent, do it. He can make a few drops of wine multiply to so many draughts." Note, Those that expect Christ's *favours* must with an implicit obedience observe his *orders*. The way of duty is the way to mercy; and Christ's methods must not be objected against.

(4.) Christ did at length miraculously supply them; for he is often better than his word, but never worse.

[1.] The miracle itself was *turning water into wine*; the substance of water acquiring a new form, and having all the accidents and qualities of wine. Such a *transformation* is a *miracle*; but the popish *transubstantiation*, the substance changed, the accidents remaining the same, is a monster. By this Christ showed himself to be the God of nature, who maketh the earth to bring forth wine, Ps. civ. 14, 15. The extracting of the blood of the grape every year from the moisture of the earth is no less a work of power, though, being according to the common law of nature, it is not such a work of wonder, as this. The beginning of Moses's miracles was turning water into blood (Exod. iv. 9; vii. 20), the beginning of Christ's miracles was turning water into wine; which intimates the difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. The curse of the law turns water into blood, common comforts into bitterness and terror; the blessing of the gospel turns water into wine. Christ hereby showed that his errand into the world was to heighten and improve creature-comforts to all believers, and make them comforts indeed. Shiloh is said to *wash his garments in wine* (Gen. xlix. 11), the water for washing being *turned into wine*. And the gospel call is, *Come ye to the waters, and buy wine*, Isa. lv. 1.

[2.] The circumstances of it magnified it and freed it from all suspicion of cheat or collusion; for,

*First*, It was done in water-pots (v. 6): *There were set there six water-pots of stone*. Observe, 1. For what use these water-pots were intended: for the legal purifications from ceremonial pollutions enjoined by the law of God, and many more by the tradition of the elders. The *Jews eat not, except they wash often* (Mark vii. 3), and they used much water in their washing, for which reason here were six large water-pots provided. It was a saying among them, *Qui multâ utitur aquâ in lavando, multas consequetur in hoc mundo divitias*—*He who uses much water in washing*

*will gain much wealth in this world*. 2. To what use Christ put them, quite different from what they were intended for; to be the receptacles of the miraculous wine. Thus Christ came to bring in the grace of the gospel, which is as *wine*, that cheereth God and man (Judg. ix. 13), instead of the shadows of the law, which were as water, *weak and beggarly elements*. These were *water-pots*, that had never been used to have wine in them; and of *stone* which is not apt to retain the scent of former liquors, if ever they had had wine in them. They contained *two or three firkins apiece*, two or three *measures, baths, or ephahs*; the quantity is uncertain, but very considerable. We may be sure that it was not intended to be all drank at this feast, but for a further kindness to the new-married couple, as the multiplied oil was to the poor widow, out of which she might *pay her debt, and live of the rest*, 2 Kings iv. 7. Christ gives like himself, gives abundantly, according to his riches in glory. It is the penman's language to say, *They contained two or three firkins*, for the Holy Spirit could have ascertained just how much; thus (as *ch. vi. 19*) teaching us to speak cautiously, and not confidently, of those things of which we have not good assurance.

*Secondly*, The water-pots were filled *up to the brim* by the servants at Christ's word, v. 7. As Moses, the servant of the Lord, when God bade him, went to the rock, to draw water; so these servants, when Christ bade them, went to the water, to fetch wine. Note, Since no difficulties can be opposed to the arm of God's power, no improbabilities are to be objected against the word of his command.

*Thirdly*, The miracle was wrought suddenly, and in such a manner as greatly magnified it.

*a.* As soon as they had filled the water-pots, presently he said, *Draw out now* (v. 8), and it was done, (*a.*) Without any ceremony, in the eye of the spectators. One would have thought, as Naaman, he should have come out, and *stood, and called on the name of God*, 2 Kings v. 11. No, he sits still in his place, says not a word, but *wills* the thing, and so works it. Note, Christ does great things and marvellous *without noise*, works manifest changes in a hidden way. Sometimes Christ, in working miracles, used words and signs, but it was *for their sakes that stood by*, *ch. xi. 42*. (*b.*) Without any hesitation or uncertainty in his own breast. He did not say, *Draw out now*, and let me *taste it*, questioning whether the thing were done as he willed it or no; but with the greatest assurance imaginable, though it was his *first miracle*, he recommends it to the master of the feast *first*. As he knew what he *would* do, so he knew what he *could* do, and made no essay in his work; but all was good, very good, even in the beginning.

*b.* Our Lord Jesus directed the servants, (*a.*) *To draw it out*; not to let it alone in



the vessel, to be admired, but to *draw it out*, to be drank. Note, [a.] Christ's works are all for use; he gives no man a talent to be buried, but to be *traded with*. Has he turned thy water into wine, given thee knowledge and grace? It is to *profit withal*; and therefore *draw out now*. [b.] Those that would know Christ must make trial of him, must attend upon him in the use of ordinary means, and then may expect extraordinary influence. That which is *laid up* for all that *fear God* is wrought for those that *trust in him* (Ps. xxxi. 19), that by the exercise of faith *draw out* what is *laid up*. (b.) To present it to the *governor of the feast*. Some think that this *governor of the feast* was only the chief guest, that sat at the upper end of the table; but, if so, surely our Lord Jesus should have had that place, for he was, upon all accounts, the principal guest; but it seems another had the uppermost room, probably one that *loved it* (Matt. xxiii. 6), and *chose it*, Luke xiv. 7. And Christ, according to his own rule, *sat down in the lowest room*; but, though he was not treated as the Master of the feast, he kindly approved himself a friend to the feast, and, if not its founder, yet its best benefactor. Others think that this *governor* was the inspector and monitor of the feast: the same with Plutarch's *symposiarcha*, whose office it was to see that each had enough, and none did exceed, and that there were no indecencies or disorders. Note, Feasts have need of governors, because too many, when they are at feasts, have not the government of themselves. Some think that this *governor* was the *chaplain*, some priest or Levite that craved a blessing and gave thanks, and Christ would have the cup brought to him, that he might bless it, and bless God for it; for the extraordinary tokens of Christ's presence and power were not to supersede, or jostle out, the ordinary rules and methods of piety and devotion.

*Fourthly*, The wine which was thus miraculously provided was of the best and richest kind, which was acknowledged by the governor of the feast; and that it was really so, and not his fancy, is certain, because he knew not whence it was, v. 9, 10. 1. It was certain that this was *wine*. The governor knew this when he drank it, though he knew not *whence it was*; the servants knew whence it was, but had not yet tasted it. If the taster had seen the drawing of it, or the drawers had had the tasting of it, something might have been imputed to fancy; but now no room is left for suspicion. 2. That it was the best wine. Note, Christ's works commend themselves even to those that know not their author. The products of miracles were always the best in their kind. This wine had a *stronger body*, and *better flavour*, than ordinary. This the governor of the feast takes notice of to the bridegroom, with an air of pleasantness, as *uncommon*. (1.) The common method was otherwise. Good

wine is brought out to the best advantage at the beginning of a feast, when the guests have their heads clear and their appetites fresh, and can relish it, and will commend it; but *when they have well drunk*, when their heads are confused, and their appetites palled, good wine is but thrown away upon them, worse will serve then. See the vanity of all the pleasures of sense; they soon surfeit, but never satisfy; the longer they are enjoyed, the less pleasant they grow. (2.) This bridegroom obliged his friends with a reserve of the best wine for the grace-cup: *Thou hast kept the good wine until now*; not knowing to whom they were indebted for this good wine, he returns the thanks of the table to the bridegroom. *She did not know that I gave her corn and wine*, Hos. ii. 8. Now, [1.] Christ, in providing thus plentifully for the guests, though he hereby allows a sober cheerful use of wine, especially in times of rejoicing (Neh. viii. 10), yet he does not invalidate his own caution, nor invade it, in the least, which is, that our hearts be not at *any time*, no not at a marriage feast, *overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*, Luke xxi. 34. When Christ provided so much *good wine* for them that had *well drunk*, he intended to try their sobriety, and to teach them *how to abound*, as well as *how to want*. Temperance *per force* is a thankless virtue; but if divine providence gives us abundance of the delights of sense, and divine grace enables us to use them moderately, this is self-denial that is praiseworthy. He also intended that some should be left for the confirmation of the truth of the miracle to the faith of others. And we have reason to think that the guests at this table were so well *taught*, or at least were now so well awed by the presence of Christ, that none of them abused this wine to excess. These two considerations, drawn from this story, may be sufficient at any time to fortify us against temptations to intemperance: *First*, That our meat and drink are the *gifts of God's bounty* to us, and we owe our liberty to use them, and our comfort in the use of them, to the mediation of Christ; it is therefore ungrateful and impious to abuse them. *Secondly*, That, wherever we are, Christ has his eye upon us; we should *eat bread before God* (Exod. xviii. 12), and then we should not *feed ourselves without fear*. [2.] He has given us a specimen of the method he takes in dealing with those that deal with him, which is, to reserve the *best for the last*, and therefore they must *deal upon trust*. The recompence of their services and sufferings is reserved for the other world; it is a glory to be *revealed*. The pleasures of sin give their colour in the cup, but *at the last bite*; but the pleasures of religion will be *pleasures for evermore*.

III. In the conclusion of this story (v. 11) we are told, 1. That this was *the beginning of*

*miracles* which Jesus did. Many miracles had been wrought concerning him at his birth and baptism, and he himself was the greatest miracle of all ; but this was the first that was wrought *by* him. He could have wrought miracles when he disputed with the doctors, but his hour was not come. He had power, but there was a *time of the hiding of his power*. 2. That herein he *manifested his glory* ; hereby he proved himself to be the Son of God, and his glory to be that of the only-begotten of the Father. He also discovered the nature and end of his office ; the power of a God, and the grace of a Saviour, appearing in all his miracles, and particularly in this, manifested the glory of the long-expected Messiah. 3. That *his disciples believed on him*. Those whom he had called (*ch. i.*), who had seen no miracle, and yet followed him, now saw this, shared in it, and had their faith strengthened by it. Note, (1.) Even the faith that is true is at first but weak. The strongest men were once babes, so were the strongest Christians. (2.) The manifesting of the glory of Christ is the great confirmation of the faith of Christians.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples : and they continued there not many days. 13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, 14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting : 15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen ; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables ; 16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence ; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. 17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. 18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things ? 19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days ? 21 But he spake of the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had

said this unto them ; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

Here we have,

I. The short visit Christ made to Capernaum, *v. 12*. It was a large and populous city, about a day's journey from Cana ; it is called *his own city* (*Matt. ix. 1*), because he made it his head-quarters in Galilee, and what little rest he had was there. It was a place of concourse, and therefore Christ chose it, that the fame of his doctrine and miracles might thence spread the further. Observe,

1. The company that attended him thither—*his mother, his brethren, and his disciples*. Wherever Christ went, (1.) He would not go alone, but would take those with him who had put themselves under his guidance, that he might instruct them, and that they might attest his miracles. (2.) He could not go alone, but they would follow him, because they liked the sweetness either of his doctrine or of his wine, *ch. vi. 26*. His mother, though he had lately given her to understand that in the works of his ministry he should pay no more respect to her than to any other person, yet followed him ; not to intercede with him, but to learn of him. His brethren also and relations, who were at the marriage and were wrought upon by the miracle there, and *his disciples*, who attended him wherever he went. It should seem, people were more affected with Christ's miracles at first than they were afterwards, when custom made them seem less strange.

2. His continuance there, which was at this time *not many days*, designing now only to begin the acquaintance he would afterwards improve there. Christ was still upon the remove, would not confine his usefulness to one place, because many needed him. And he would teach his followers to look upon themselves but as *sojourners* in this world, and his ministers to follow their opportunities, and go where their work led them. We do not now find Christ in the synagogues, but he privately instructed his friends, and thus entered upon his work *by degrees*. It is good for young ministers to accustom themselves to pious and edifying discourse in private, that they may with the better preparation, and greater awe, approach their public work. He did not stay long at Capernaum, because the passover was at hand, and he must attend it at Jerusalem ; for every thing is beautiful in its season. The less good must give way to the greater, and all the dwellings of Jacob must give place to the gates of Zion.

II. The passover he kept at Jerusalem ; it is the *first* after his baptism, and the evangelist takes notice of all the passovers he kept henceforward, which were four in all, the *fourth* that at which he suffered (three years after this), and half a year was now past since his baptism. Christ, being *made*



under the law, observed the passover at Jerusalem; see Exod. xxiii. 17. Thus he taught us by his example a strict observance of divine institutions, and a diligent attendance on religious assemblies. He went up to Jerusalem when the passover was at hand, that he might be there *with the first*. It is called *the Jews' passover*, because it was peculiar to them (Christ is *our* Passover); now shortly God will no longer own it for his. Christ kept the passover at Jerusalem yearly, ever since he was twelve years old, in obedience to the law; but now that he has entered upon his public ministry we may expect something more from him than before; and two things we are here told he did there:—

1. He *purged the temple*, v. 14—17. Observe here,

(1.) The first place we find him in at Jerusalem was the *temple*, and, it should seem, he did not make any public appearance till he came thither; for his presence and preaching there were that glory of the latter house which was to *exceed the glory of the former*, Hag. ii. 9. It was foretold (Mal. iii. 1): *I will send my messenger, John Baptist; he never preached in the temple, but the Lord, whom ye seek, he shall suddenly come to his temple*, suddenly after the appearing of John Baptist; so that this was the time, and the temple the place, when, and where, the Messiah was to be expected.

(2.) The first work we find him at in the temple was the *purging* of it; for so it was foretold there (Mal. iii. 2, 3): *He shall sit as a refiner and purify the sons of Levi*. Now was come the time of reformation. Christ came to be the great reformer; and, according to the method of the reforming kings of Judah, he first *purged out* what was amiss (and that used to be passover-work too, as in Hezekiah's time, 2 Chron. xxx. 14, 15, and Josiah's, 2 Kings xxiii. 4, &c.), and then taught them to do well. First *purge out the old leaven*, and then *keep the feast*. Christ's design in coming into the world was to reform the world; and he expects that all who come to him should reform their hearts and lives, Gen. xxxv. 2. And this he has taught us by purging the temple. See here,

[1.] What were the corruptions that were to be purged out. He found a market in one of the courts of the temple, that which was called the *court of the Gentiles*, within the *mountain of that house*. There, *First*, They sold *oxen, and sheep, and doves*, for sacrifice; we will suppose, not for common use, but for the convenience of those who came out of the country, and could not bring their sacrifices *in kind* along with them; see Deut. xiv. 24—26. This *market* perhaps had been kept by the pool of Bethesda (*ch.* v. 2), but was admitted into the temple by the chief priests, for filthy lucre; for, no doubt, the rents for standing there, and fees for searching the beasts sold there, and certifying that they were *without blemish*, would be a considerable

revenue to them. Great corruptions in the church owe their rise to the love of money, 1 Tim. vi. 5, 10. *Secondly*, They *changed money*, for the convenience of those that were to pay a half-shekel *in specie* every year, by way of poll, for the service of the tabernacle (Exod. xxx. 12), and no doubt they got by it.

[2.] What course our Lord took to purge out those corruptions. He had seen these in the temple formerly, when he was in a private station; but never went about to drive them out till now, when he had taken upon him the public character of a prophet. He did not complain to the chief priests, for he knew they countenanced those corruptions. But he himself,

*First*, Drove out the *sheep and oxen*, and those that *sold them*, out of the temple. He never used *force* to drive any *into* the temple, but only to drive those out that profaned it. He did not seize the sheep and oxen for himself, did not *distrain* and impound them, though he found them *damage faissant*—*actual trespassers* upon his Father's ground; he only drove them out, and their owners with them. He made a scourge of *small cords*, which probably they had led their sheep and oxen with, and thrown them away upon the ground, whence Christ gathered them. Sinners prepare the scourges with which they themselves will be driven out from the temple of the Lord. He did not make a scourge to chastise the offenders (his punishments are of another nature), but only to drive out the cattle; he aimed no further than at reformation. See Rom. xiii. 3, 4; 2 Cor. x. 8.

*Secondly*, He *poured out the changers' money*, τὸ κέρμα—the *small money*—the *Nummorum Fumulus*. In *pouring out* the money, he showed his contempt of it; he threw it to the ground, to the earth as it was. In *overthrowing* the tables, he showed his displeasure against those that make religion a matter of worldly gain. Money-changers in the temple are the scandal of it. Note, In reformation, it is good to make thorough work; he *drove them all out*; and not only threw out the money, but, in overturning the tables, threw out the trade too.

*Thirdly*, He *said to them that sold doves* (sacrifices for the poor), *Take these things hence*. The doves, though they took up less room, and were a less nuisance than the oxen and sheep, yet must not be allowed there. The sparrows and swallows were welcome, that were left to God's providence (Ps. lxxxiv. 3), but not the doves, that were appropriated to man's profit. God's temple must not be made a pigeon-house. But see Christ's prudence in his zeal. When he drove out the sheep and oxen, the owners might follow them; when he poured out the money, they might gather it up again; but, if he had turned the doves flying, perhaps they could not have been retrieved; therefore to them that sold doves he said, *Take these things hence*. Note, Discretion must always

guide and govern our zeal, that we do nothing unbecoming ourselves, or mischievous to others.

*Fourthly*, He gave them a good reason for what he did: *Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise*. Reason for conviction should accompany force for correction.

a. Here is a reason why they should not profane the temple, because it was the *house of God*, and not to be made a house of merchandise. Merchandise is a good thing in the exchange, but not in the temple. This was, (a.) to alienate that which was dedicated to the honour of God; it was *sacrilege*; it was robbing God. (b.) It was to debase that which was solemn and awful, and to make it mean. (c.) It was to disturb and distract those services in which men ought to be most solemn, serious, and intent. It was particularly an affront to the *sons of the stranger* in their worship to be forced to herd themselves with the sheep and oxen, and to be distracted in their worship by the noise of a market, for this market was kept in the court of the Gentiles. (d.) It was to make the business of religion subservient to a secular interest; for the holiness of the place must advance the market, and promote the sale of their commodities. Those make God's house a house of merchandise, [a.] Whose minds are filled with cares about worldly business when they are attending on religious exercises, as those, Amos viii. 5; Ezek. xxxiii. 31. [b.] Who perform divine offices for filthy lucre, and sell the gifts of the Holy Ghost, Acts viii. 18.

b. Here is a reason why he was concerned to purge it, because it was *his Father's house*. And, (a.) Therefore he had authority to purge it, for he was faithful, as a Son over his own house. Heb iii. 5, 6. In calling God his Father, he intimates that he was the Messiah, of whom it was said, *He shall build a house for my name, and I will be his Father*, 2 Sam. vii. 13, 14. (b.) Therefore he had a zeal for the purging of it: "It is *my Father's house*, and therefore I cannot bear to see it profaned, and *him* dishonoured." Note, If God be our Father in heaven, and it be therefore our desire that his name may be sanctified, it cannot but be our grief to see it polluted. Christ's purging the temple thus may justly be reckoned among his *wonderful works*. *Inter omnia signa quæ fecit Dominus, hoc mihi videtur esse mirabilis—Of all Christ's wonderful works this appears to me the most wonderful*.—Hieron. Considering, [a.] That he did it without the assistance of any of his friends; probably it had been no hard matter to have raised the mob, who had a great veneration for the temple, against these profaners of it; but Christ never countenanced any thing that was tumultuous or disorderly. There was none to uphold, but his own arm did it. [b.] That he did it without the resistance of any of his enemies, either the market-people themselves or the chief priests

that gave them their licences, and had the *posse templi—temple force*, at their command. But the corruption was too plain to be justified; sinners' own consciences are reformers' best friends; yet that was not all, there was a divine power put forth herein, a power over the spirits of men; and in this non-resistance of theirs that scripture was fulfilled (Mal. iii. 2, 3), *Who shall stand when he appeareth?*

*Fifthly*, Here is the remark which his disciples made upon it (v. 17): *They remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*. They were somewhat surprised at first to see him to whom they were directed as the *Lamb of God* in such a heat, and him whom they believed to be the *King of Israel* take so little state upon him as to do this himself; but one scripture came to their thoughts, which taught them to reconcile this action both with the meekness of the *Lamb of God* and with the majesty of the *King of Israel*: for David, speaking of the Messiah, takes notice of his *zeal for God's house*, as so great that it even *ate him up*, it made him forget himself, Ps. lxxix. 9. Observe, 1. The disciples came to understand the meaning of what Christ did, by remembering the scriptures. *They remembered now that it was written*. Note, The word of God and the works of God do mutually explain and illustrate each other. Dark scriptures are expounded by their accomplishment in providence, and difficult providences are made easy by comparing them with the scriptures. See of what great use it is to the disciples of Christ to be *ready and mighty* in the scriptures, and to have their memories well stored with scripture truths, by which they will be *furnished for every good work*, 2. The scripture they remembered was very apposite: *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*. David was in this a type of Christ that he was *zealous for God's house*, Ps. cxxxii. 2, 3. What he did for it was *with all his might*; see 1 Chron xxix. 2. The latter part of that verse (Ps. lxxix. 9) is applied to Christ (Rom. xv. 3), as the former part of it here. All the graces that were to be found among the Old-Testament saints were eminently in Christ, and particularly this of zeal for the house of God, and in them, as they were patterns to us, so they were types of him. Observe, (1.) Jesus Christ was zealously affected to the house of God, his church: he loved it, and was always jealous for its honour and welfare. (2.) This zeal did even *eat him up*; it made him *humble himself*, and *spend himself*, and *expose himself*. *My zeal has consumed me*, Ps. cxix. 139. Zeal for the house of God forbids us to consult our own credit, ease, and safety, when they come in competition with our duty and Christ's service, and sometimes carries on our souls in our duty so far and so fast that our bodies cannot keep pace with them, and makes us as deaf as our Master was to those who suggested, *Spare thyself*.



The grievances here redressed might seem but small, and such as should have been con-  
 nived at; but such was Christ's zeal that he  
 could not bear even those that sold and  
 bought in the temple. *Si ibi ebrios inveniret  
 quid faceret Dominus!* (saith St. Austin.)  
*If he had found drunkards in the temple, how  
 much more would he have been displeased!*

2. Christ, having thus purged the temple,  
 gave a sign to those who demanded it to  
 prove his authority for so doing. Observe  
 here,

(1.) Their demand of a sign: *Then answered the Jews*, that is the multitude of the  
 people, with their leaders. Being Jews, they  
 should rather have stood by him, and assisted  
 him to vindicate the honour of their temple;  
 but, instead of this, they objected against  
 it. Note, Those who apply themselves in  
 good earnest to the work of reformation must  
 expect to meet with opposition. When they  
 could object nothing against the thing itself,  
 they questioned his authority to do it:  
*"What sign showest thou unto us, to prove  
 thyself authorized and commissioned to do  
 these things?"* It was indeed a good work  
 to purge the temple; but what had he to do  
 to undertake it, who was in no office there?  
 They looked upon it as an act of jurisdiction,  
 and that he must prove himself a prophet,  
*yea, more than a prophet.* But was not the  
 thing itself sign enough? His ability to  
 drive so many from their posts, without op-  
 position, was a proof of his authority; he  
 that was armed with such a divine power was  
 surely armed with a divine commission. *What  
 ailed these buyers and sellers, that they fled,  
 that they were driven back?* Surely it was  
*at the presence of the Lord* (Ps. cxiv. 5, 7),  
 no less a presence.

(2.) Christ's answer to this demand, v. 19.  
 He did not immediately work a miracle to  
 convince them, but gave them a sign in  
 something to come, the truth of which must  
 appear by the event, according to Deut.  
 xviii. 21, 22.

Now, [1.] The sign that he gives them is  
 his own death and resurrection. He refers  
 them to that which would be, *First*, His last  
 sign. If they would not be convinced by  
 what they saw and heard, let them wait.  
*Secondly*, The great sign to prove him to be  
 the Messiah; for concerning him it was fore-  
 told that he should be bruised (Isa. liii. 5),  
*cut off* (Dan. ix. 26), and yet that he should  
 not see corruption, Ps. xvi. 10. These things  
 were fulfilled in the blessed Jesus, and there-  
 fore truly he was the Son of God, and had  
 authority in the temple, his Father's house.

[2.] He foretels his death and resurrection,  
 not in plain terms, as he often did to his dis-  
 ciples, but in figurative expressions; as af-  
 terwards, when he gave this for a sign, he  
 called it the sign of the prophet Jonas, so  
 here, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I  
 will raise it up.* Thus he spoke in parables  
 to those who were willingly ignorant, that

they might not perceive, Matt. xiii. 13, 14.  
 Those that will not see shall not see. Nay,  
 this figurative speech used here proved such  
 a stumbling-block to them that it was produced  
 in evidence against him at his trial to prove  
 him a blasphemer. Matt. xxvi. 60, 61. Had  
 they humbly asked him the meaning of what  
 he said, he would have told them, and it had  
 been a savour of life unto life to them, but  
 they were resolved to cavil, and it proved a  
 savour of death unto death. They that would  
 not be convinced were hardened, and the  
 manner of expressing this prediction occa-  
 sioned the accomplishment of the prediction  
 itself. *First*, He foretels his death by the  
 Jews' malice, in these words, *Destroy you  
 this temple*; that is, "You will destroy it,  
 I know you will. I will permit you to  
 destroy it." Note, Christ, even at the be-  
 ginning of his ministry, had a clear fore-  
 sight of all his sufferings at the end of  
 it, and yet went on cheerfully in it. It  
 is good, at setting out, to expect the worst.  
*Secondly*, He foretels his resurrection by his  
 own power: *In three days I will raise it up.*  
 There were others that were raised, but Christ  
 raised himself, resumed his own life.

[3.] He chose to express this by *destroying*  
 and *re-edifying* the temple, *First*, Because  
 he was now to justify himself in purging the  
 temple, which they had profaned; as if he  
 had said, "You that defile one temple will  
 destroy another; and I will prove my autho-  
 rity to purge what you have defiled by raising  
 what you will destroy." The profaning of  
 the temple is the destroying of it, and its re-  
 formation its resurrection. *Secondly*, Because  
 the death of Christ was indeed the destruc-  
 tion of the Jewish temple, the procuring cause  
 of it; and his resurrection was the raising up  
 of another temple, the gospel church, Zech.  
 vi. 12. The ruins of their place and nation  
 (ch. xi. 48) were the riches of the world  
 See Amos ix. 11; Acts xv. 16.

(3.) Their cavil at this answer: "*Forty  
 and six years was this temple in building,*  
*v. 20.* Temple work was always slow work,  
 and canst thou make such quick work of it?"  
 Now here, [1.] They show some knowledge;  
 they could tell how long the temple was in  
 building. Dr. Lightfoot computes that it  
 was just forty-six years from the founding of  
 Zerubbabel's temple, in the second year of  
 Cyrus, to the complete settlement of the  
 temple service, in the 32d year of Artaxer-  
 xes; and the same from Herod's beginning  
 to build this temple, in the 18th year of his  
 reign, to this very time, when the Jews said  
 that this was just forty-six years: *ῥκοδομήθη  
 —hath this temple been built.* [2.] They  
 show more ignorance, *First*, Of the meaning  
 of Christ's words. Note, Men often run  
 into gross mistakes by understanding that  
 literally which the scripture speaks figura-  
 tively. What abundance of mischief has  
 been done by interpreting, *This is my body*,  
 after a corporal and carnal manner! *Secondly*,

Of the almighty power of Christ, as if he could do no more than another man. Had they known that this was he who *built all things* in six days they would not have made it such an absurdity that he should build a temple in three days.

(1.) A vindication of Christ's answer from their cavil. The difficulty is soon solved by explaining the terms: *He spoke of the temple of his body, v. 21.* Though Christ had discovered a great respect for the temple, in purging it, yet he will have us know that the holiness of it, which he was so jealous for, was but *typical*, and leads us to the consideration of another temple of which that was but a shadow, the substance being Christ, Heb. ix. 9; Col. ii. 17. Some think that when he said, *Destroy this temple*, he pointed to his own body, or laid his hand upon it; however, it is certain that he *spoke of the temple of his body.* Note, The body of Christ is the true temple, of which that at Jerusalem was a type. [1.] Like the temple, it was built by immediate divine direction: "*A body hast thou prepared me*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 19. [2.] Like the temple, it was a *holy house*; it is called *that holy thing*. [3.] It was, like the temple, the habitation of God's glory; there the eternal Word dwelt, the true shechinah. He is *Emmanuel—God with us*. [4.] The temple was the place and *medium* of intercourse between God and Israel: there God revealed himself to them; there they presented themselves and their services to him. Thus by Christ God speaks to us, and we speak to him. Worshipers looked *towards* that house, 1 Kings viii. 30, 35. So we must worship God with an eye to Christ.

(5.) A reflection which the disciples made upon this, long after, inserted here, to illustrate the story (v. 22): *When he was risen from the dead*, some years after, *his disciples remembered that he had said this.* We found them, v. 17, remembering what had been *written before of him*, and here we find them remembering what they had *heard from him*. Note, The memories of Christ's disciples should be like the treasure of the good householder, furnished with things both *new and old*, Matt. xiii. 52. Now observe,

[1.] *When they remembered* that saying: *When he was risen from the dead.* It seems, they did not at this time fully understand Christ's meaning, for they were as yet but babes in knowledge; but they laid up the saying in their hearts, and afterwards it became both intelligible and useful. Note, It is good to *hear for the time to come*, Isa. xlii. 23. The juniors in years and profession should treasure up those truths of which at present they do not well understand either the meaning or the use, for they will be serviceable to them hereafter, when they come to greater proficiency. It was said of the scholars of Pythagoras that his precepts seemed to freeze in them till they were forty years old, and then they began to thaw; so this saying of Christ

revived in the memories of his disciples *when he was risen from the dead*; and why then? *First*, Because then the Spirit was poured out to bring things to their remembrance which Christ had said to them, and to make them both *easy and ready* to them, ch. xiv. 26. That very day that Christ rose from the dead he *opened their understandings*, Luke xxiv. 45. *Secondly*, Because then this saying of Christ was fulfilled. When the temple of his body had been *destroyed* and was *raised again*, and that upon the *third day*, then they remembered this among other words which Christ had said to this purport. Note, It contributes much to the understanding of the scripture to observe the fulfilling of the scripture. The event will expound the prophecy.

[2.] What use they made of it: *They believed the scripture, and the word that Jesus had said*; their belief of these was confirmed and received fresh support and vigour. They were slow of heart to believe (Luke xxiv. 25), but they were *sure*. The *scripture* and the *word of Christ* are here put together, not because they concur and exactly agree together, but because they mutually illustrate and strengthen each other. When the disciples saw both what they had read in the Old Testament, and what they had heard from Christ's own mouth, fulfilled in his death and resurrection, they were the more confirmed in their belief of both.

23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. 24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, 25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

We have here an account of the success, the poor success, of Christ's preaching and miracles at Jerusalem, while he kept the passover there. Observe,

I. That our Lord Jesus, when he was at Jerusalem at the passover, did preach and work miracles. People's *believing on him* implied that he preached; and it is expressly said, *They saw the miracles he did.* He was now in Jerusalem, the holy city, whence the *word of the Lord* was to go forth. His residence was mostly in Galilee, and therefore when he was in Jerusalem he was very busy. The time was holy time, the *feast-day*, time appointed for the service of God; at the passover the *Levites taught the good knowledge of the Lord* (2 Chron. xxx. 22), and Christ took that opportunity of preaching, when the concourse of people was great, and thus he would own and honour the divine institution of the passover.

II. That hereby many were brought to *believe in his name*, to acknowledge him a



teacher come from God, as Nicodemus did (*ch. iii. 2*), a great prophet; and, probably, some of those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem believed him to be the Messiah promised, so ready were they to welcome the first appearance of that *bright and morning star*.

III. That yet *Jesus did not commit himself unto them* (*v. 24*): οὐκ ἐπίστευεν ἑαυτὸν αὐτοῖς—He did not trust himself with them. It is the same word that is used for believing in him. So that to believe in Christ is to commit ourselves to him and to his guidance. Christ did not see cause to repose any confidence in these new converts at Jerusalem, where he had many enemies that sought to destroy him, either, 1. Because they were false, at least some of them, and would betray him if they had an opportunity, or were strongly tempted to do so. He had more disciples that he could trust among the Galileans than among the dwellers at Jerusalem. In dangerous times and places, it is wisdom to take heed in whom you confide; μὴνῆσο ἀνθρώπων—learn to distrust. Or, 2. Because they were weak, and I would hope that this was the worst of it; not that they were treacherous and designed him a mischief, but, (1.) They were timorous, and wanted zeal and courage, and might perhaps be frightened to do a wrong thing. In times of difficulty and danger, cowards are not fit to be trusted. Or, (2.) They were tumultuous, and wanted discretion and management. These in Jerusalem perhaps had their expectations of the temporal reign of the Messiah more raised than others, and, in that expectation, would be ready to give some bold strokes at the government if Christ would have committed himself to them and put himself at the head of them; but he would not, for his kingdom is not of this world. We should be shy of turbulent unquiet people, as our Master here was, though they profess to believe in Christ, as these did.

IV. That the reason why he did not commit himself to them was because he knew them (*v. 25*), knew the wickedness of some and the weakness of others. The evangelist takes this occasion to assert Christ's omniscience. 1. He knew all men, not only their names and faces, as it is possible for us to know many, but their nature, dispositions, affections, designs, as we do not know any man, scarcely ourselves. He knows all men, for his powerful hand made them all, his piercing eye sees them all, sees into them. He knows his subtle enemies, and all their secret projects; his false friends, and their true characters; what they really are, whatever they pretend to be. He knows them that are truly his, knows their integrity, and knows their infirmity too. He knows their frame. 2. He needed not that any should testify of man. His knowledge was not by information from others, but by his own infallible intuition. It is the infelicity of earthly princes that they must see with other men's eyes, and hear with other men's ears,

and take things as they are represented to them; but Christ goes purely upon his own knowledge. Angels are his messengers, but not his spies, for his own eyes run to and fro through the earth, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. This may comfort us in reference to Satan's accusations, that Christ will not take men's characters from him. 3. He knew what was in man; in particular persons, in the nature and race of man. We know what is done by men; Christ knows what is in them, tries the heart and the reins. This is the prerogative of that essential eternal Word, Heb. iv. 12, 13. We invade his prerogative if we presume to judge men's hearts. How fit is Christ to be the Saviour of men, very fit to be the physician, who has such a perfect knowledge of the patient's state and case, temper and distemper; knows what is in him! How fit also to be the Judge of all! For the judgment of him who knows all men, all in men, must needs be according to truth.

Now this is all the success of Christ's preaching and miracles at Jerusalem, in this journey. The Lord comes to his temple, and none come to him but a parcel of weak simple people, that he can neither have credit from nor put confidence in; yet he shall at length see of the travail of his soul.

### CHAP. III.

In this chapter we have, 1. Christ's discourse with Nicodemus, a Pharisee, concerning the great mysteries of the gospel, in which he here privately instructs him, *ver. 1–21*. 11. John Baptist's discourse with his disciples concerning Christ, upon occasion of his coming into the neighbourhood where John was (*ver. 22–36*), in which he fairly and faithfully resigns all his honour and interest to him.

THERE was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it

cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. 9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? 13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

We found, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that few were brought to Christ at Jerusalem; yet here was *one*, a considerable one. It is worth while to go a great way for the salvation though but of *one soul*. Observe,

I. Who this Nicodemus was. Not many mighty and noble are called; yet some are, and here was one. *Not many of the rulers, or of the Pharisees*; yet, 1. This was a man of the Pharisees, bred to learning, a scholar. Let it not be said that all Christ's followers are unlearned and ignorant men. The prin-

ciples of the Pharisees, and the peculiarities of their sect, were directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity; yet there were some in whom even those high thoughts were cast down and brought into obedience to Christ. The grace of Christ is able to subdue the greatest opposition. 2. He was a *ruler of the Jews*, a member of the great sanhedrim, a senator, a privy-counsellor, a man of authority in Jerusalem. Bad as things were, there were some rulers *well inclined*, who yet could do little good because the stream was so strong against them; they were over-ruled by the majority, and yoked with those that were corrupt, so that the good which they wished to do they could not do; yet Nicodemus continued in his place, and did what he *could*, when he could not do what he *would*.

II. His solemn address to our Lord Jesus Christ, v. 2. See here,

1. When he came: *He came to Jesus by night*. Observe, (1.) He made a private and particular address to Christ, and did not think it enough to hear his public discourses. He resolved to talk with him by himself, where he might be free with him. Personal converse with skilful faithful ministers about the affairs of our souls would be of great use to us, Mal. ii. 7. (2.) He made this address *by night*, which may be considered, [1.] As an act of *prudence and discretion*. Christ was engaged all day in *public* work, and he would not interrupt him then, nor expect his attendance then, but observed *Christ's hour*, and waited on him when he was at *leisure*. Note, Private advantages to ourselves and our own families must give way to those that are public. The greater good must be preferred before the less. Christ had many enemies, and therefore Nicodemus came to him *incognito*, lest being known to the chief priests they should be the more enraged against Christ. [2.] As an act of *zeal and forwardness*. Nicodemus was a man of business, and could not spare time all day to make Christ a visit, and therefore he would rather take time from the diversions of the *evening*, or the rest of the *night*, than not converse with Christ. When others were sleeping, he was getting knowledge, as David by meditation, Ps. lxxiii. 6, and cxix. 148. Probably it was the very next night after he saw Christ's miracles, and he would not neglect the first opportunity of pursuing his convictions. He knew not how soon Christ might leave the town, nor what might happen betwixt that and another feast, and therefore would lose no time. In the night his converse with Christ would be more free, and less liable to disturbance. These were *Noctes Christiana*—*Christian nights*, much more instructive than the *Noctes Atticae*—*Attic nights*. Or, [3.] As an act of *fear and cowardice*. He was afraid, or ashamed, to be *seen* with Christ, and therefore came *in the night*. When religion is out of *fashion*, there are many Nicodemites, especially among the rulers, who



have a better affection to Christ and his religion than they would be known to have. But observe, *First*, Though he came by night, Christ bade him welcome, accepted his integrity, and pardoned his infirmity; he considered his *temper*, which perhaps was *timorous*, and the *temptation* he was in from his place and office; and hereby taught his ministers to become all things to all men, and to encourage good beginnings, though weak. *Paul preached privately to those of reputation*, Gal. ii. 2. *Secondly*, Though now he came by night, yet afterwards, when there was occasion, he owned Christ *publicly*, ch. vii. 50; xix. 39. The grace which is at first but a grain of mustard-seed may grow to be a great tree.

2. What he said. He did not come to talk with Christ about politics and state-affairs (though he was a ruler), but about the concerns of his own soul and its salvation, and, without circumlocution, comes immediately to the business; he calls Christ *Rabbi*, which signifies a *great man*; see Isa. xix. 20. *He shall send them a Saviour, and a great one; a Saviour and a rabbi*, so the word is. There are hopes of those who have a respect for Christ, and think and speak honourably of him. He tells Christ how far *he had attained*: *We know that thou art a teacher*. Observe, (1.) His *assertion* concerning Christ: *Thou art a teacher come from God*; not educated nor ordained by men, as other teachers, but supported with divine inspiration and divine authority. He that was to be the sovereign Ruler came first to be a *teacher*; for he would rule with reason, not with rigour, by the power of truth, not of the sword. The world lay in ignorance and mistake; the Jewish teachers were corrupt, and caused them to err: *It is time for the Lord to work*. He came a *teacher from God*, from God as the *Father of mercies*, in pity to a dark deceived world; from God as the *Father of lights and fountain of truth*, all the light and truth upon which we may venture our souls. (2.) His *assurance* of it: *We know*, not only *I*, but *others*; so he took it for granted, the thing being so plain and self-evident. Perhaps he knew that there were divers of the Pharisees and rulers with whom he conversed that were under the same convictions, but had not the grace to own it. Or, we may suppose that he speaks in the plural number (*We know*) because he brought with him one or more of his friends and pupils, to receive instructions from Christ, knowing them to be of common concern. "Master," saith he, "we come with a desire to be taught, to be thy scholars, for we are fully satisfied thou art a divine teacher." (3.) The ground of this assurance: *No man can do those miracles that thou doest, except God be with him*. Here, [1.] We are assured of the truth of Christ's miracles, and that they were not counterfeit. Here was Nicodemus, a judicious, sensible, inquisitive

man, one that had all the *reason* and *opportunity* imaginable to examine them, so fully satisfied that they were real miracles that he was wrought upon by them to go contrary to his interest, and to the stream of those of his own rank, who were prejudiced against Christ. [2.] We are directed what inference to draw from Christ's miracles: Therefore we are to receive him as a *teacher come from God*. His miracles were his credentials. The course of nature could not be altered but by the power of the God of nature, who, we are sure, is the God of truth and goodness, and would never set his seal to a lie or a cheat.

III. The discourse between Christ and Nicodemus hereupon, or, rather, the sermon Christ preached to him; the contents of it, and that perhaps an abstract of Christ's public preaching; see v. 11, 12. Four things our Saviour here discourses of:—

1. Concerning the *necessity and nature of regeneration* or the *new birth*, v. 3—8. Now we must consider this,

(1.) As *pertinently answered* to Nicodemus's address. Jesus *answered*, v. 3. This answer was either, [1.] A *rebuke* of what he saw *defective* in the address of Nicodemus. It was not enough for him to admire Christ's miracles, and acknowledge his mission, but he must be *born again*. It is plain that he expected the *kingdom of heaven*, the kingdom of the Messiah now shortly to appear. He is betimes aware of the dawning of that day; and, according to the common notion of the Jews, he expects it to appear in external pomp and power. He doubts not but this Jesus, who works these miracles, is either the Messiah or his prophet, and therefore makes his court to him, compliments him, and so hopes to secure a share to himself of the advantages of that kingdom. But Christ tells him that he can have no benefit by that *change of the state*, unless there be a *change of the spirit*, of the principles and dispositions, equivalent to a new birth. Nicodemus came *by night*: "But this will not do," saith Christ. His religion must be owned before men; so Dr. Hammond. Or, [2.] A *reply* to what he saw *designed* in his address. When Nicodemus owned Christ a *teacher come from God*, one entrusted with an extraordinary revelation from heaven, he plainly intimated a desire to know what this revelation was and a readiness to receive it; and Christ declares it.

(2.) As *positively and vehemently asserted* by our Lord Jesus: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee. I the Amen, the Amen, say it*; so it may be read: "I the faithful and true witness." The matter is settled irreversibly that *except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God*. "I say it to thee, though a Pharisee, though a master in Israel." Observe,

[1.] What it is that is required: to be *born again*; that is, *First*, We must *live a*

*new life.* Birth is the beginning of life; to be *born again* is to begin anew, as those that have hitherto lived either much amiss or to little purpose. We must not think to patch up the old building, but begin from the foundation. *Secondly*, We must have a *new nature*, new principles, new affections, new aims. We must be born *ἀνωθεν*, which signifies both *denuo*—again, and *desuper*—from above. 1. We must be born *anew*; so the word is taken, Gal. iv. 9, and *ab initio*—from the beginning, Luke i. 3. By our *first birth* we are corrupt, shapen in sin and iniquity; we must therefore undergo a second birth; our souls must be *fashioned and enlivened* anew. 2. We must be born *from above*, so the word is used by the evangelist, ch. iii. 31; xix. 11, and I take this to be especially intended here, not excluding the other; for to be born *from above* supposes being *born again*. But this new birth has its rise *from heaven* (ch. i. 13) and its tendency *to heaven*: it is to be born to a *divine and heavenly life*, a life of communion with God and the upper world, and, in order to this, it is to partake of a *divine nature* and bear the *image of the heavenly*.

[2.] The indispensable necessity of this: "Except a man (any one that partakes of the human nature, and consequently of its corruptions) be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Messiah begun in *grace* and perfected in *glory*." Except we be *born from above*, we cannot see this. That is, *First*, We cannot understand the nature of it. Such is the nature of things pertaining to the kingdom of God (in which Nicodemus desired to be instructed) that the soul must be re-modelled and moulded, the natural man must become a spiritual man, before he is capable of receiving and understanding them, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *Secondly*, We cannot receive the comfort of it, cannot expect any benefit by Christ and his gospel, nor have any part or lot in the matter. Note, Regeneration is absolutely necessary to our happiness here and hereafter. Considering what we are by nature, how corrupt and sinful,—what *God* is, in whom alone we can be happy,—and what *heaven* is, to which the perfection of our happiness is reserved,—it will appear, in the nature of the thing, that we must be *born again*, because it is impossible that we should be *happy* if we be not *holy*; see 1 Cor. vi. 11, 12

This great truth of the necessity of regeneration being thus solemnly laid down,

a. It is objected against by Nicodemus (v. 4): *How can a man be born when he is old*, old as I am; *γέρων ὢν*—being an old man? *Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* Herein appears, (a.) His weakness in knowledge; what Christ spoke spiritually he seems to have understood after a corporal and carnal manner, as if there were no other way of regenerating and new-moulding an immortal soul

than by new-framing the body, and bringing that back to the *rock out of which it was hewn*, as if there was such a connection between the soul and the body that there could be no fashioning the *heart anew* but by forming the *bones anew*. Nicodemus, as others of the Jews, valued himself, no doubt, very much on his *first birth* and its dignities and privileges,—the *place* of it, the Holy Land, perhaps the holy city,—his *parentage*, such as that which Paul could have gloried in, Phil. iii. 5. And therefore it is a great surprise to him to hear of being *born again*. Could he be better bred and born than bred and born an Israelite, or by any other birth stand fairer for a place in the kingdom of the Messiah? Indeed they looked upon a proselyted Gentile to be as one *born again* or *born anew*, but could not imagine how a Jew, a Pharisee, could ever *better himself* by being *born again*; he therefore thinks, if he must be *born again*, it must be of *her* that bore him *first*. They that are proud of their *first birth* are hardly brought to a *new birth*. (b.) His willingness to be taught. He does not turn his back upon Christ because of his hard saying, but ingenuously acknowledges his ignorance, which implies a desire to be better informed; and so I take this, rather than that he had such gross notions of the new birth Christ spoke of: "Lord, make me to understand this, for it is a riddle to me: I am such a fool as to know no other way for a man to be born than of his mother." When we meet with that in the things of God which is *dark*, and *hard to be understood*, we must with humility and industry continue our attendance upon the means of knowledge, till God shall reveal even that unto us.

b. It is opened and further explained by our Lord Jesus, v. 5—8. From the objection he takes occasion,

(a.) To repeat and confirm what he had said (v. 5): "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee*, the very same that I said before." Note, The word of God is not yea and nay, but yea and amen; what he hath said he will abide by, whoever saith against it; nor will he retract any of his sayings for the ignorance and mistakes of men. Though Nicodemus understood not the mystery of regeneration, yet Christ asserts the necessity of it as positively as before. Note, It is folly to think of evading the obligation of evangelical precepts, by pleading that they are unintelligible, Rom. iii. 3, 4.

(b.) To expound and clear what he had said concerning regeneration; for the explanation of which he further shows,

[a.] The author of this blessed change, and who it is that works it. To be born again is to be born of the Spirit, v. 5—8. The change is not wrought by any wisdom or power of our own, but by the power and influence of the blessed Spirit of grace. It is the sanctification of the Spirit (1 Pet. i. 2) and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 5. The



word he works by is his inspiration, and the heart to be wrought on he has access to.

[b.] The *nature* of this change, and what that is which is wrought; it is *spirit*, v. 6. Those that are regenerated are made *spiritual*, and refined from the dross and dregs of sensuality. The dictates and interests of the rational and immortal soul have retrieved the dominion they ought to have over the flesh. The Pharisees placed their religion in external purity and external performances; and it would be a mighty change indeed with them, no less than a new birth, to become *spiritual*.

[c.] The *necessity* of this change. *First*, Christ here shows that it is necessary in the *nature of the thing*, for we are not fit to enter into the kingdom of God till we are born again: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*, v. 6. Here is our malady, with the causes of it, which are such that it is plain there is no remedy but we must be *born again*. 1. We are here told *what we are*: We are *flesh*, not only *corporeal* but *corrupt*, Gen. vi. 3. The soul is still a spiritual substance, but so wedded to the flesh, so captivated by the will of the flesh, so in love with the delights of the flesh, so employed in making provision for the flesh, that it is justly called *flesh*; it is carnal. And what communion can there be between God, who is a *spirit*, and a soul in this condition? 2. *How we came to be so*; by being *born of the flesh*. It is a corruption that is bred in the bone with us, and therefore we cannot have a new nature, but we must be *born again*. The corrupt nature, which is *flesh*, takes rise from our *first birth*; and therefore the new nature, which is *spirit*, must take rise from a second birth. Nicodemus spoke of entering again into his mother's womb, and being born; but, if he could do so, to what purpose? If he were born of his mother a hundred times, that would not mend the matter, for still that *which is born of the flesh is flesh*; a clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean. He must seek for another original, must be born of the Spirit, or he cannot become spiritual. The case is, in short, this: though man is made to consist of body and soul, yet his spiritual part had then so much the dominion over his corporeal part that he was denominated a *living soul* (Gen. ii. 7), but by indulging the appetite of the flesh, in eating forbidden fruit, he prostituted the just dominion of the soul to the tyranny of sensual lust, and became no longer a *living soul*, but *flesh*: *Dust thou art*. The living soul became dead and inactive; thus in the day he sinned he *surely died*, and so he became *earthly*. In this degenerate state, he begat a son in his own likeness; he transmitted the human nature, which had been entirely deposited in his hands, thus corrupted and depraved; and in the same plight it is still propagated. Corruption and sin are woven into our nature; we are *shapen in iniquity*,

which makes it necessary that the nature be changed. It is not enough to put on a new coat or a new face, but we must put on the *new man*, we must be new creatures. *Secondly*, Christ makes it further necessary, by his own word: *Marvel not that I said unto thee, You must be born again*, v. 7. 1. Christ hath said it, and as he himself never did, nor ever will, unsay it, so all the world cannot gainsay it, that we *must be born again*. He who is the great *Lawgiver*, whose will is a law,—he who is the great Mediator of the new covenant, and has full power to settle the terms of our reconciliation to God and happiness in him,—he who is the great Physician of souls, knows their case, and what is necessary to their cure,—he hath said, *You must be born again*. “I said unto thee that which all are concerned in, You must, you all, one as well as another, *you must be born again*: not only the common people, but the rulers, the *masters in Israel*.” 2. We are not to *marvel* at it; for when we consider the holiness of the God with whom we have to do, the great design of our redemption, the depravity of our nature, and the constitution of the happiness set before us, we shall not think it strange that so much stress is laid upon this as the one thing needful, that *we must be born again*.

[d.] This change is illustrated by two comparisons. *First*, The regenerating work of the Spirit is compared to *water*, v. 5. To be born again is to be *born of water* and of the Spirit, that is, of the Spirit working like water, as (Matt. iii. 11) *with the Holy Ghost and with fire* means with the Holy Ghost as with fire. 1. That which is primarily intended here is to show that the Spirit, in sanctifying a soul, (1.) *Cleanses* and purifies it as water, takes away its filth, by which it was unfit for the kingdom of God. It is the *washing of regeneration*, Tit. iii. 5. *You are washed*, 1 Cor. vi. 11. See Ezek. xxxvi. 25. (2.) *Cools* and refreshes it, as water does the hunted hart and the weary traveller. The Spirit is compared to water, ch. vii. 38, 39; Isa. xlv. 3. In the first creation, the fruits of heaven were *born of water* (Gen. i. 20), in allusion to which, perhaps, they that are born from above are said to be born of water. 2. It is probable that Christ had an eye to the ordinance of baptism, which John had used and he himself had begun to use, “You must be born again of the Spirit,” which regeneration by the Spirit should be signified by washing with water, as the visible sign of that spiritual grace: not that all they, and they only, that are baptized, are saved; but without that new birth which is wrought by the Spirit, and signified by baptism, none shall be looked upon as the *protected privileged* subjects of the kingdom of heaven. The Jews cannot partake of the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom, they have so long looked for, unless they quit all expectations



of being justified by the works of the law, and submit to the *baptism of repentance*, the great gospel duty, *for the remission of sins*, the great gospel privilege. *Secondly*, It is compared to *wind*: *The wind bloweth where it listeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit*, v. 8. The same word (*πνεῦμα*) signifies both the wind and the Spirit. The Spirit came upon the apostles in a *rushing mighty wind* (Acts ii. 2), his *strong influences* on the hearts of sinners are compared to the *breathing of the wind* (Ezek. xxxvii. 9), and his *sweet influences* on the souls of saints to the north and south wind, Cant. iv. 16. This comparison is here used to show, 1. That the Spirit, in regeneration, works *arbitrarily*, and as a free agent. *The wind bloweth where it listeth* for us, and does not attend our order, nor is subject to our command. *God directs it*; it *fulfils his word*, Ps. cxlviii. 8. The Spirit dispenses his influences where, and when, on whom, and in what measure and degree, he pleases, *dividing to every man severally as he will*, 1 Cor. xii. 11. 2. That he works *powerfully*, and with evident effects: *Thou hearest the sound thereof*; though its causes are hidden, its effects are manifest. When the soul is brought to mourn for sin, to groan under the burden of corruption, to breathe after Christ, to cry *Abba—Father*, then we *hear the sound of the Spirit*, we find he is at work, as Acts ix. 11, *Behold he prayeth*. 3. That he works *mysteriously*, and in secret hidden ways: *Thou canst not tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes*. How it gathers and how it spends its strength is a riddle to us; so the manner and methods of the Spirit's working are a mystery. *Which way went the Spirit?* 1 Kings xxii. 24. See Eccl. xi. 5, and compare it with Ps. cxxxix. 14. 2. Here is a discourse concerning the *certainly and sublimity of gospel truths*, which Christ takes occasion for from the weakness of Nicodemus. Here is,

(1.) The objection which Nicodemus still made (v. 9): *How can these things be?* Christ's explication of the doctrine of the necessity of regeneration, it should seem, made it never the clearer to him. The corruption of nature which makes it *necessary*, and the way of the Spirit which makes it *practicable*, are as much mysteries to him as the thing itself; though he had in general owned Christ a divine teacher, yet he was unwilling to receive his teachings when they did not agree with the notions he had imbibed. Thus many profess to admit the doctrine of Christ in general, and yet will neither believe the truths of Christianity nor submit to the laws of it further than *they please*. Christ shall be their teacher, provided they may choose their lesson. Now here, [1.] Nicodemus owns himself ignorant of Christ's meaning, after all: "*How can these things be?*" They are things I do not understand, my capacity will not reach them." Thus the *things of the Spirit of God* are fool-

ishness to the natural man. He is not only estranged from them, and therefore they are dark to him, but prejudiced against them, and therefore they are foolishness to him. [2.] Because this doctrine was *unintelligible* to him (so he was pleased to make it), he questions the truth of it; as if, because it was a *paradox* to him, it was a *chimera* in itself. Many have such an opinion of their own capacity as to think that that cannot be *proved* which they cannot *believe*; by *wisdom* they *knew not* Christ.

(2.) The reproof which Christ gave him for his dulness and ignorance: "*Art thou a master in Israel, Διδάσκαλος—a teacher*, a tutor, one who sits in Moses's chair, and yet not only unacquainted with the doctrine of regeneration, but incapable of understanding it?" This word is a reproof, [1.] To those who undertake to teach others and yet are ignorant and unskilful in the word of righteousness themselves. [2.] To those that spend their time in learning and teaching notions and ceremonies in religion, niceties and criticisms in the scripture, and neglect that which is practical and tends to reform the heart and life. Two words in the reproof are very emphatic:—*First*, The place where his lot was cast: in *Israel*, where there was such great plenty of the means of knowledge, where divine revelation was. He might have learned this out of the Old Testament. *Secondly*, The things he was thus ignorant in: *these things, these necessary things, these great things, these divine things*; had he never read Ps. l. 5, 10; Ezek. xviii. 31; xxxvi. 25, 26?

(3.) Christ's discourse, hereupon, of the certainty and sublimity of gospel truths (v. 11—13), to show the folly of those who make strange of these things, and to recommend them to our search. Observe here,

[1.] That the truths Christ taught were very *certain* and what we may venture upon (v. 11): *We speak that we do know*. *We*; whom does he mean besides himself? Some understand it of those that bore witness to him and with him on earth, the prophets and John Baptist; they *spoke* what they *knew*, and had seen, and were themselves abundantly satisfied in: divine revelation carries its own proof along with it. Others of those that bore witness from heaven, the Father and the Holy Ghost; the Father was with him, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him; therefore he speaks in the plural number, as ch. xiv. 23: *We will come unto him*. Observe, *First*, That the truths of Christ are of undoubted certainty. We have all the reason in the world to be assured that the sayings of Christ are *faithful sayings*, and such as we may venture our souls upon; for he is not only a *credible* witness, who would not go about to deceive us, but a *competent* witness, who could not himself be deceived: *We testify that we have seen*. He spoke not upon hearsay, but upon the clearest evidence, and



therefore with the greatest assurance. What he spoke of God, of the invisible world, of heaven and hell, of the divine will concerning us, and the counsels of peace, was what he *knew*, and *had seen*, for he was *by him as one brought up with him*, Prov. viii. 30. Whatever Christ spoke, he spoke *of his own knowledge*. Secondly, That the unbelief of sinners is greatly aggravated by the infallible certainty of the truths of Christ. The things are thus sure, thus clear; and yet *you receive not our witness*. Multitudes to be *unbelievers* of that which yet (so cogent are the motives of credibility) they cannot *disbelieve*!

[2.] The truths Christ taught, though communicated in language and expressions borrowed from common and earthly things, yet in their own nature were most sublime and heavenly; this is intimated, v. 12: "*If I have told them earthly things, that is, have told them the great things of God in similitudes taken from earthly things, to make them the more easy and intelligible, as that of the new birth and the wind,—if I have thus accommodated myself to your capacities, and lisped to you in your own language, and cannot make you to understand my doctrine,—what would you do if I should accommodate myself to the nature of the things, and speak with the tongue of angels, that language which mortals cannot utter? If such familiar expressions be stumbling-blocks, what would abstract ideas be, and spiritual things painted proper?*" Now we may learn hence, *First*, To admire the height and depth of the doctrine of Christ; it is a great mystery of godliness. The things of the gospel are *heavenly things*, out of the road of the enquiries of human reason, and much more out of the reach of its discoveries. *Secondly*, To acknowledge with thankfulness the condescension of Christ, that he is pleased to suit the manner of the gospel revelation to our capacities, *to speak to us as to children*. He considers our *frame*, that we are *of the earth*, and our *place*, that we are *on the earth*, and therefore speaks to us earthly things, and makes things sensible the vehicle of things spiritual, to make them the more easy and familiar to us. Thus he has done both in parables and in sacraments. *Thirdly*, To lament the corruption of our nature, and our great unaptness to receive and entertain the truths of Christ. Earthly things are despised because they are *vulgar*, and heavenly things because they are *abstruse*; and so, whatever method is taken, still some fault or other is found with it (Matt. xi. 17), but Wisdom is, and will be, *justified of her children*, notwithstanding.

[3.] Our Lord Jesus, and he alone, was fit to reveal to us a doctrine thus certain, thus sublime: *No man hath ascended up into heaven but he*, v. 13.

*First*, None but Christ was able to reveal to us the will of God for our salvation. Nicodemus addressed Christ as a prophet; but he must know that he is greater than all

the Old-Testament prophets, for none of them *had ascended into heaven*. They wrote by divine inspiration, and not of their own knowledge; see ch. i. 18. Moses ascended into the mount, but not into heaven. No man hath attained to the certain knowledge of God and heavenly things as Christ has; see Matt. xi. 27. It is not for us to send to heaven for instructions; we must wait to receive what instructions Heaven will send to us; see Prov. xxx. 4; Deut. xxx. 12.

*Secondly*, Jesus Christ is able, and fit, and every way qualified, to reveal the will of God to us; for it is *he that came down from heaven and is in heaven*. He had said (v. 12), *How shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?* Now here, 1. He gives them an instance of those *heavenly things* which he could tell them of, when he tells them of one that *came down from heaven*, and yet is the *Son of man*; is the *Son of man*, and yet is *in heaven*. If the regeneration of the *soul of man* is such a mystery, what then is the incarnation of the *Son of God*? These are divine and heavenly things indeed. We have here an intimation of Christ's two distinct natures in one person: his divine nature, in which he *came down from heaven*; his human nature, in which he is the *Son of man*; and that union of those two, in that while he is the *Son of man* yet he is *in heaven*. 2. He gives them a proof of his ability to speak to them *heavenly things*, and to lead them into the arcana of the kingdom of heaven, by telling them, (1.) That *he came down from heaven*. The intercourse settled between God and man began *above*; the first motion towards it did not arise from this earth, but *came down from heaven*. We love him, and send to him, because he first loved us, and sent to us. Now this intimates, [1.] Christ's divine nature. He that came down from heaven is certainly more than a mere man; he is the *Lord from heaven*, 1 Cor. xv. 47. [2.] His intimate acquaintance with the divine counsels; for, coming from the court of heaven, he had been from eternity conversant with them. [3.] The *manifestation of God*. Under the Old Testament God's favours to his people are expressed by his *hearing from heaven* (2 Chron. vii. 14), *looking from heaven* (Ps. lxxx. 14), *speaking from heaven* (Neh. ix. 13), *sending from heaven*, Ps. lvii. 3. But the New Testament shows us *God coming down from heaven*, to teach and save us. That he thus *descended* is an admirable *mystery*, for the Godhead cannot change places, nor did he bring his body from heaven; but that he thus *condescended* for our redemption is a more admirable *mercy*; herein he commended his love. (2.) That *he is the Son of man*, that Son of man spoken of by Daniel (vii. 13), by which the Jews always understand to be meant the Messiah. Christ, in calling himself the *Son of man*, shows that he is the *second Adam*, for the first Adam was the *father of man*. And of all the Old-Testament

titles of the Messiah he chose to make use of *this*, because it was most expressive of his *humility*, and most agreeable to his present state of *humiliation*. (3.) That he *is in heaven*. Now at this time, when he is talking with Nicodemus on earth, yet, as God, he is *in heaven*. The *Son of man*, as such, was not in heaven till his ascension; but he that was the Son of man was now, by his divine nature, every where present, and particularly in heaven. Thus the Lord of glory, as such, could not be crucified, nor could God, as such, shed his blood; yet that person who was the Lord of glory was crucified (1 Cor. ii. 8), and God purchased the church with *his own blood*, Acts xx. 28. So close is the union of the two natures in one person that there is a communication of properties. He doth not say *ὁ ἱστί*, but *ὁ ὢν τῷ ὀπαυῷ*. GOD is the *ὁ ὢν*—*he that is*, and heaven is the habitation of *his holiness*.

3. Christ here discourses of the *great design of his own coming into the world, and the happiness of those that believe in him*, v. 14—18. Here we have the very marrow and quintessence of the whole gospel, that *faithful saying* (1 Tim. i. 15), that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the children of men from death, and recover them to life. Now sinners are *dead men* upon a twofold account:—(1.) As one that is mortally wounded, or sick of an incurable disease, is said to be a *dead man*, for he is dying; and so Christ came to save us, by *healing* us, as the brazen serpent healed the Israelites, v. 14, 15. (2.) As one that is justly condemned to die for an unpardonable crime is a *dead man*, he is *dead in law*; and, in reference to this part of our danger, Christ came to save as a prince or judge, publishing an act of indemnity, or general pardon, under certain provisos; this saving here is opposed to condemning, v. 16—18.

[1.] Jesus Christ came to save us by *healing* us, as the children of Israel that were stung with fiery serpents were cured and *lived* by looking up to the brazen serpent; we have the story of it, Num. xxi. 6—9. It was the *last* miracle that passed through the hand of Moses before his death. Now in this type of Christ we may observe,

*First*, The *deadly and destructive* nature of *sin*, which is implied here. The guilt of sin is like the *pain* of the biting of a fiery serpent; the power of corruption is like the *venom* diffused thereby. The devil is the old serpent, subtle at first (Gen. iii. 1), but ever since *fiery*, and his temptations *fiery darts*, his assaults terrifying, his victories destroying. Ask awakened consciences, ask damned sinners, and they will tell you, how charming soever the allurements of sin are, *at the last it bites like a serpent*, Prov. xxiii. 30—32. God's wrath against us for sin is as those fiery serpents which God sent among the people, to punish them for their murmurings. The curses of the law are as fiery serpents, so are all the tokens of divine wrath.

*Secondly*, The powerful remedy provided against this fatal malady. The case of poor sinners is deplorable; but is it desperate? Thanks be to God, it is not; there is balm in Gilead. The *Son of man is lifted up*, as the *serpent of brass* was by Moses, which cured the stung Israelites. 1. It was a *serpent of brass* that cured them. Brass is *bright*; we read of Christ's feet *shining like brass*, Rev. i. 15. It is *durable*; Christ is the same. It was made in the shape of a *fiery serpent*, and yet had no poison, no sting, fitly representing Christ, who was *made sin for us* and yet knew no sin; was *made in the likeness of sinful flesh* and yet not sinful; as harmless as a serpent of brass. The serpent was a cursed creature; Christ was made a *curse*. That which cured them reminded them of their plague; so in Christ sin is set before us most fiery and formidable. 2. It was lifted up upon a pole, and so *must* the Son of man be lifted up; thus it *behoved him*, Luke xxiv. 26, 46. No remedy now. Christ is lifted up, (1.) In his *crucifixion*. He was lifted up upon the cross. His death is called his being *lifted up*, ch. xii. 32, 33. He was lifted up as a spectacle, as a mark, lifted up between heaven and earth, as if he had been unworthy of either and abandoned by both. (2.) In his *exaltation*. He was lifted up to the Father's right hand, to give repentance and remission; he was lifted up to the cross, to be further lifted up to the crown. (3.) In the *publishing and preaching* of his everlasting gospel, Rev. xiv. 6. The serpent was lifted up that all the thousands of Israel might see it. Christ in the gospel is exhibited to us, evidently set forth; Christ is *lifted up* as an *ensign*, Isa. xi. 10. 3. It was lifted up by Moses. Christ was made under the law of Moses, and Moses testified of him. 4. Being thus lifted up, it was appointed for the cure of those that were bitten by fiery serpents. He that sent the plague provided the remedy. None could redeem and save us but he whose justice had condemned us. It was God himself that *found the ransom*, and the efficacy of it depends upon his appointment. The *fiery serpents* were sent to punish them for their *tempting Christ* (so the apostle saith, 1 Cor. x. 9), and yet they were healed by virtue derived from him. He whom we have offended is *our peace*.

*Thirdly*, The way of *applying* this remedy, and that is by *believing*, which plainly alludes to the Israelites' *looking up* to the brazen serpent, in order to their being healed by it. If any stung Israelite was either so little sensible of his pain and peril, or had so little confidence in the word of Moses as not to look up to the brazen serpent, justly did he die of his wound; but every one that *looked up to it* did well, Num. xxi. 9. If any so far slight either their disease by sin or the method of cure by Christ as not to embrace Christ upon his own terms, their blood is upon their own head. He hath said, *Look,*



and be saved (Isa. xlv. 22), look and live. We must take a complacency in and give consent to the methods which Infinite Wisdom has taken of saving a guilty world, by the mediation of Jesus Christ, as the great sacrifice and intercessor.

*Fourthly*, The great encouragements given us by faith to look up to him. 1. It was for this end that he was *lifted up*, that his followers might be saved; and he will pursue his end. 2. The offer that is made of salvation by him is general, that *whosoever believes* in him, without exception, might have benefit by him. 3. The salvation offered is complete. (1.) *They shall not perish*, shall not die of their wounds; though they may be pained and ill frightened, iniquity shall not be their ruin. But that is not all. (2.) *They shall have eternal life*. They shall not only not die of their wounds in the wilderness, but they shall reach Canaan (which they were then just ready to enter into); they shall enjoy the promised rest.

[2.] Jesus Christ came to save us by *pardon*ing us, that we might not die by the sentence of the law, v. 16, 17. Here is *gospel* indeed, good news, the best that ever came from heaven to earth. Here is *much*, here is *all* in a little, the word of reconciliation in miniature.

*First*, Here is God's love, in giving his Son for the world (v. 16), where we have three things:—1. The great gospel mystery revealed: *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son*. The love of God the Father is the original of our regeneration by the Spirit and our reconciliation by the lifting up of the Son. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is the *only-begotten Son of God*. This magnifies his love in giving him for us, in giving him to us; now know we that he loves us, when he has given his *only-begotten Son for us*, which expresses not only his dignity in himself, but his dearness to his Father; he was *always his delight*. (2.) In order to the redemption and salvation of man, it pleased God to give his *only-begotten Son*. He not only sent him into the world with full and ample power to negotiate a peace between heaven and earth, but he *gave him*, that is, he gave him up to suffer and die for us, as the great propitiation or expiatory sacrifice. It comes in here as a reason why he *must be lifted up*; for so it was determined and designed by the Father, who gave him for this purpose, and *prepared him a body* in order to it. His enemies could not have taken him if his Father had not given him. Though he was not yet crucified, yet in the determinate counsel of God he was given up, Acts ii. 23. Nay, further, God has given him, that is, he has made an offer of him, to all, and given him to all true believers, to all the intents and purposes of the new covenant. He has given him to be our prophet, a witness to the people, the high priest of our profession, to be our peace, to be head of the church and head over all

things to the church, to be to us all we need. (3.) Herein God has commended his love to the world: *God so loved the world*, so really, so richly. Now his creatures shall see that he loves them, and wishes them well. He so loved the world of fallen man as he did not love that of fallen angels; see Rom. v. 8; 1 John iv. 10. Behold, and wonder, that the great God should love such a worthless world! That the holy God should love such a wicked world with a love of good will, when he could not look upon it with any complacency. This was a time of love indeed, Ezek. xvi. 6, 8. The Jews vainly conceived that the Messiah should be sent only in love to their nation, and to advance them upon the ruins of their neighbours; but Christ tells them that he came in love to the whole world, Gentiles as well as Jews, 1 John ii. 2. Though many of the world of mankind perish, yet God's giving his only-begotten Son was an instance of his love to the whole world, because through him there is a general offer of life and salvation made to all. It is love to the revolted rebellious province to issue out a proclamation of pardon and indemnity to all that will come in, plead it upon their knees, and return to their allegiance. So far God loved the apostate lapsed world that he sent his Son with this fair proposal, that *whosoever believes in him*, one or other, *shall not perish*. Salvation has been of the Jews, but now Christ is known as salvation to the ends of the earth, a common salvation. 2. Here is the great gospel duty, and that is to believe in Jesus Christ (whom God has thus given, given for us, given to us), to accept the gift, and answer the intention of the giver. We must yield an unfeigned assent and consent to the record God hath given in his word concerning his Son. God having given him to us to be our prophet, priest, and king, we must give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him. 3. Here is the great gospel benefit: *That whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish*. This he had said before, and here repeats it. It is the unspeakable happiness of all true believers, for which they are eternally indebted to Christ, (1.) That they are saved from the miseries of hell, delivered from going down to the pit; they shall not perish. God has taken away their sin, they shall not die; a pardon is purchased, and so the attainder is reversed. (2.) They are entitled to the joys of heaven: they shall have everlasting life. The convicted traitor is not only pardoned, but preferred, and made a favourite, and treated as one whom the King of kings delights to honour. Out of prison he comes to reign, Eccl. iv. 14. If believers, then children; and, if children, then heirs.

*Secondly*, Here is God's design in sending his Son into the world: it was that the world through him might be saved. He came into the world with salvation in his eye, with salvation in his hand. Therefore the aforementioned offer of life and salvation is sin-

cere, and shall be made good to all that by faith accept it (v. 17): *God sent his Son into the world*, this guilty, rebellious, apostate world; sent him as his agent or ambassador, not as sometimes he had sent angels into the world as visitants, but as resident. Ever since man sinned, he has dreaded the approach and appearance of any special messenger from heaven, as being conscious of guilt and looking for judgment: *We shall surely die, for we have seen God*. If therefore the Son of God himself come, we are concerned to enquire on what errand he comes: *Is it peace?* Or, as they asked Samuel trembling, *Comest thou peaceably?* And this scripture returns the answer, *Peaceably*. 1. He did not come to condemn the world. We had reason enough to expect that he should, for it is a guilty world; it is convicted, and what cause can be shown why judgment should not be given, and execution awarded, according to law? That *one blood* of which all nations of men are made (Acts xvii. 26) is not only tainted with an hereditary disease, like Gehazi's leprosy, but it is tainted with an hereditary guilt, like that of the Amalekites, with whom God had war from generation to generation; and justly may such a world as this be condemned; and if God would have sent to condemn it he had angels at command, to pour out the vials of his wrath, a cherub with a flaming sword ready to do execution. *If the Lord had been pleased to kill us*, he would not have sent his Son amongst us. He came with full powers indeed to execute judgment (ch. v. 22, 27), but did not begin with a judgment of condemnation, did not proceed upon the outlawry, nor take advantage against us for the breach of the covenant of innocency, but put us upon a new trial before a throne of grace. 2. He came that the world through him might be saved, that a door of salvation might be opened to the world, and whoever would might enter in by it. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and so saving it. An act of indemnity is passed and published, through Christ a remedial law made, and the world of mankind dealt with, not according to the rigours of the first covenant, but according to the riches of the second; that the world through him might be saved, for it could never be saved but through him; there is not salvation in any other. This is good news to a convinced conscience, healing to broken bones and bleeding wounds, that Christ, our judge, came not to condemn, but to save.

[3.] From all this is inferred the happiness of true believers: *He that believeth on him is not condemned*, v. 18. Though he has been a sinner, a great sinner, and stands convicted (*habes confitentem reum*—by his own confession), yet, upon his believing, process is stayed, judgment is arrested, and he is not condemned. This denotes more than a reprieve; he is not condemned, that is, he is

acquitted; he stands upon his deliverance (as we say), and if he be not condemned he is discharged; *οὐ κρίνεται—he is not judged*, not dealt with in strict justice, according to the desert of his sins. He is accused, and he cannot plead not guilty to the indictment, but he can plead in bar, can plead a *noli prosecute* upon the indictment, as blessed Paul does, *Who is he that condemns?* It is Christ that died. He is afflicted, chastened of God, persecuted by the world; but he is not condemned. The cross perhaps lies heavy upon him, but he is saved from the curse: condemned by the world, it may be, but not condemned with the world, Rom. viii. 1; 1 Cor. xi. 32.

4. Christ, in the close, discourses concerning the deplorable condition of those that persist in unbelief and wilful ignorance, v. 18—21.

(1.) Read here the doom of those that will not believe in Christ: they are condemned already. Observe, [1.] How great the sin of unbelievers is; it is aggravated from the dignity of the person they slight; they believe not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, who is infinitely true, and deserves to be believed, infinitely good, and deserves to be embraced. God sent one to save us that was dearest to himself; and shall not he be dearest to us? Shall we not believe on his name who has a name above every name? [2.] How great the misery of unbelievers is: they are condemned already; which bespeaks, First, A certain condemnation. They are as sure to be condemned in the judgment of the great day as if they were condemned already. Secondly, A present condemnation. The curse has already taken hold of them; the wrath of God now fastens upon them. They are condemned already, for their own hearts condemn them. Thirdly, A condemnation grounded upon their former guilt: He is condemned already, for he lies open to the law for all his sins; the obligation of the law is in full force, power, and virtue, against him, because he is not by faith interested in the gospel defeasance; he is condemned already, because he has not believed. Unbelief may truly be called the great damning sin, because it leaves us under the guilt of all our other sins; it is a sin against the remedy, against our appeal.

(2.) Read also the doom of those that would not so much as know him, v. 19. Many inquisitive people had knowledge of Christ and his doctrine and miracles, but they were prejudiced against him, and would not believe in him, while the generality were sotishly careless and stupid, and would not know him. And this is the condemnation, the sin that ruined them, that light is come into the world, and they loved darkness rather. Now here observe, [1.] That the gospel is light, and, when the gospel came, light came into the world. Light is self-evidencing, so



is the gospel; it proves its own divine origin. Light is *discovering*, and *truly the light is sweet*, and rejoices the heart. It is a light shining in a dark place, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it. It *come into all the world* (Col. i. 6), and not confined to one corner of it, as the Old-Testament light was. [2.] It is the unspeakable folly of the most of men that they loved darkness rather than light, rather than *this light*. The Jews loved the dark shadows of their law, and the instructions of their *blind guides*, rather than the doctrine of Christ. The Gentiles loved their superstitious services of an *unknown God*, whom they *ignorantly worshipped*, rather than the *reasonable service* which the gospel enjoins. Sinners that were wedded to their lusts loved their ignorance and mistakes, which supported them in their sins, rather than the truths of Christ, which would have parted them from their sins. Man's apostasy began in an affectation of forbidden knowledge, but is kept up by an affectation of forbidden ignorance. Wretched man is in love with his sickness, in love with his slavery, and will not be made *free*, will not be made *whole*. [3.] The true reason why men love darkness rather than light is *because their deeds are evil*. They love darkness because they think it is an excuse for their evil deeds, and they hate the light because it robs them of the good opinion they had of themselves, by showing them their sinfulness and misery. Their case is sad, and, because they are resolved that they will not *mend it*, they are resolved that they will not *see it*. [4.] Wilful ignorance is so far from excusing sin that it will be found, at the great day, to aggravate the condemnation: *This is the condemnation*, this is what ruins souls, that they shut their eyes against the light, and will not so much as admit a parley with Christ and his gospel; they set God so much at defiance that they desire not the knowledge of his ways, Job xxi. 14. We must account in the judgment, not only for the knowledge we *had*, and *used not*, but for the knowledge we *might have had*, and *would not*; not only for the knowledge we *sinned against*, but for the knowledge we *sinned away*. For the further illustration of this he shows (v. 20, 21) that according as men's hearts and lives are good or bad, so they stand affected to the light Christ has brought into the world.

*First*, It is not strange if those that do evil, and resolve to persist in it, hate the light of Christ's gospel; for it is a common observation that *every one that doeth evil hateth the light*, v. 20. Evil-doers seek concealment, out of a *sense* of shame and fear of punishment; see Job xxiv. 13, &c. Sinful works are *works of darkness*; sin from the first affected concealment, Job xxxi. 33. The *light shakes the wicked*, Job xxxviii. 12, 13. Thus the gospel is a terror to the wicked

world: *They come not to this light*, but keep as far off it as they can, *lest their deeds should be reprov'd*. Note, 1. The light of the gospel is sent into the world to *reprove the evil deeds* of sinners; to make them manifest (Eph. v. 13), to *show people their transgressions*, to show that to be sin which was not thought to be so, and to show them the evil of their transgressions, that *sin by the new commandment might appear exceeding sinful*. The gospel has its convictions, to make way for its consolations. 2. It is for this reason that evil-doers *hate the light* of the gospel. There were those who *had done evil* and were sorry for it, who bade this light welcome, as the *publicans and harlots*. But he that *does evil*, that does it and resolves to go on in it, *hateth the light*, cannot bear to be told of his faults. All that opposition which the gospel of Christ has met with in the world comes from the *wicked heart*, influenced by the *wicked one*. Christ is hated because sin is loved. 3. They who do not *come to the light* thereby evidence a secret *hatred* of the light. If they had not an antipathy to *saving knowledge*, they would not sit down so contentedly in *damning ignorance*.

*Secondly*, On the other hand, upright hearts, that approve themselves to God in their integrity, bid this light welcome (v. 21): *He that doeth truth cometh to the light*. It seems, then, that though the gospel had many enemies it had some friends. It is a common observation that *truth seeks no corners*. Those who mean and act honestly dread not a scrutiny, but desire it rather. Now this is applicable to the gospel light; as it *convinces and terrifies* evil-doers, so it *confirms and comforts* those that walk in their integrity. Observe here, 1. The character of a *good man*. (1.) He is one that *doeth truth*; that is, he acts truly and sincerely in all he does. Though sometimes he comes short of *doing good*, the good he would do, yet he *doeth truth*, he aims honestly; he has his infirmities, but holds fast his integrity; as Gaius, that *did faithfully* (3 John 5), as Paul (2 Cor. i. 12), as Nathanael (ch. i. 47), as Asa, 1 Kings xv. 14. (2.) He is one that *cometh to the light*. He is ready to receive and entertain divine revelation as far as it appears to him to be so, what uneasiness soever it may create him. He that *doeth truth* is willing to know the *truth* by himself, and to *have his deeds made manifest*. A good man is much employed in trying himself, and is desirous that God would try him, Ps. xxvi. 2. He is solicitous to *know* what the will of God is, and resolves to *do it*, though ever so contrary to his own will and interest. 2. Here is the character of a *good work*: it is *wrought in God*, in union with him by a covenanting faith, and in communion with him by devout affections. Our works are *then* good, and will bear the test, when the will of God is

the rule of them and the glory of God the end of them; when they are done in his strength, and for his sake, to him, and not to men; and if, by the light of the gospel, it be manifest to us that our works are thus wrought, *then shall we have rejoicing*, Gal. vi. 4; 2 Cor. i. 12.

Thus far we have Christ's discourse with Nicodemus; it is probable that much more passed between them, and it had a good effect, for we find (*ch. xix. 39*) that Nicodemus, though he was puzzled at first, yet afterwards became a faithful disciple of Christ.

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. 23 And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. 24 For John was not yet cast into prison. 25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. 26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him. 27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. 28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease. 31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. 32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. 33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. 34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*. 35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. 36 He that believeth on the Son

hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

In these verses we have,

I. Christ's removal into the land of Judea (*v. 22*), and there he tarried with his disciples. Observe, 1. Our Lord Jesus, after he entered upon his public work, travelled much, and removed often, as the patriarchs in their sojournings. As it was a good part of his humiliation that he had no certain dwelling-place, but was, as Paul, *in journeyings often*, so it was an instance of his unwearied industry, in the work for which he came into the world, that he went about in prosecution of it; many a weary step he took to do good to souls. The *Sun of righteousness* took a large circuit to diffuse his light and heat, Ps. xix. 6. 2. He was not wont to stay long at Jerusalem. Though he went frequently thither, yet he soon returned into the country; as here. *After these things*, after he had had this discourse with Nicodemus, he came into the land of Judea; not so much for *greater privacy* (though mean and obscure places best suited the humble Jesus in his humble state) as for *greater usefulness*. His preaching and miracles, perhaps, made *most noise* at Jerusalem, the fountain-head of news, but did *least good* there, where the most considerable men of the Jewish church had so much the ascendant. 3. When he came into the land of Judea his *disciples came with him*; for these were *they that continued with him in his temptations*. Many that flocked to him at Jerusalem could not follow his motions into the country, they had no business there; but his disciples attended him. If the ark remove, it is better to *remove and go after it* (as those did, Josh. iii. 3) than sit still without it, though it be in Jerusalem itself. 4. There he *tarried with them, διετρεψε*—He conversed with them, discoursed with them. He did not retire into the country for his ease and pleasure, but for more free conversation with his disciples and followers. See Cant. vii. 11, 12. Note, Those that are ready to *go with Christ* shall find him as ready to *stay with them*. It is supposed that he now staid five or six months in this country. 5. There he *baptized*; he admitted disciples, such as believed in him, and had more honesty and courage than those had at Jerusalem, *ch. ii. 24*. John began to baptize in the land of Judea (Matt. iii. 1), therefore Christ began there, for John had said, *There comes one after me*. He himself baptized not, with his own hand, but his disciples by his orders and directions, as appears, *ch. iv. 2*. But his disciples' baptizing was his baptizing. Holy ordinances are Christ's, though administered by weak men.

II. John's continuance in his work, as long



as his opportunities lasted, v. 23, 24. Here we are told,

1. That *John was baptizing*. Christ's baptism was, for substance, the same with John's, for John bore witness to Christ, and therefore they did not at all clash or interfere with one another. But, (1.) Christ began the work of preaching and baptizing before *John laid it down*, that he might be ready to receive John's disciples when he should be taken off, and so the wheels might be kept going. It is a comfort to useful men, when they are going off the stage, to see those rising up who are likely to fill up their place. (2.) John continued the work of preaching and baptizing though Christ had *taken it up*; for he would still, according to the *measure given to him*, advance the interests of God's kingdom. There was still work for John to do, for Christ was not yet *generally known*, nor were the minds of people *thoroughly prepared* for him by repentance. From heaven John had received his *command*, and he would go on in his work till he thence received his *countermand*, and would have his dismission from the same hand that gave him his commission. He does not *come in* to Christ, lest what had formerly passed should look like a combination between them; but *he goes on* with his work, till Providence lays him aside. The greater gifts of some do not *render* the labours of others, that come short of them, *needless and useless*; there is work enough for all hands. They are sullen that will sit down and do nothing when they see themselves out-shone. Though we have but one talent, we must account for that: and, when we see ourselves *going off*, must *yet go on* to the last.

2. That he baptized in Enon near Salim, places we find nowhere else mentioned, and therefore the learned are altogether at a loss where to find them. Wherever it was, it seems that John removed from *place to place*; he did not think that there was any virtue in Jordan, because Jesus was baptized there, which should engage him to stay there, but as he saw cause he removed to other waters. Ministers must follow their opportunities. He chose a place where there was much water, *ἕδρα πολλά*—*many waters*, that is, many *streams* of water; so that wherever he met with any that were willing to submit to his baptism water was at hand to baptize them with, *shallow* perhaps, as is usual where there are *many* brooks, but such as would serve his purpose. And in that country plenty of water was a valuable thing.

3. That *whether people came to him and were baptized*. Though they did not come in such vast crowds as they did when he first appeared, yet now he was not without encouragement, but there were still those that attended and owned him. Some refer this both to John and to Jesus: *They came and were baptized*; that is, some came to John, and were baptized by him, some to Jesus,

and were baptized by him, and, as their baptism was one, so were their hearts.

4. It is noted (v. 24) that *John was not yet cast into prison*, to clear the order of the story, and to show that these passages are to come in before Matt. iv. 12. John never desisted from his work as long as he had his liberty; nay, he seems to have been the more industrious, because he foresaw his time was short; he was not *yet cast into prison*, but he expected it ere long, *ch. ix. 4*.

III. A contest between *John's disciples and the Jews about purifying*, v. 25. See how the gospel of Christ came not to *send peace upon earth*, but *division*. Observe, 1. Who were the disputants: *some of John's disciples, and the Jews* who had not submitted to his baptism of repentance. Penitents and impenitents divide this sinful world. In this contest, it should seem, John's disciples were the *aggressors*, and gave the *challenge*; and it is a sign that they were novices, who had more zeal than discretion. The truths of God have often suffered by the rashness of those that have undertaken to defend them before they were able to do it. 2. What was the matter in dispute: *about purifying, about religious washing*. (1.) We may suppose that John's disciples cried up his baptism, his purifying, as *instar omnium*—*superior to all others*, and gave the preference to that as perfecting and superseding all the purifications of the Jews, and they were in the right; but *young converts* are too apt to boast of their attainments, whereas he that finds the *treasure* should *hide it* till he is sure that he has it, and not talk of it too much at first. (2.) No doubt the Jews with as much assurance applauded the *purifyings* that were in use among them, both those that were instituted by the law of Moses and those that were imposed by the tradition of the elders; for the former they had a divine warrant, and for the latter the usage of the church. Now it is very likely that the Jews in this dispute, when they could not *deny* the excellent nature and design of John's baptism, raised an objection against it from Christ's baptism, which gave occasion for the complaint that follows here (v. 26): "Here is John baptizing in one place," say they, "and Jesus at the same time baptizing in another place; and therefore John's baptism, which his disciples so much applaud, is either," [1.] "*Dangerous*, and of *ill consequence* to the peace of the church and state, for you see it opens a door to endless parties. Now that John has begun, we shall have every little teacher set up for a baptist presently. Or," [2.] "At the best it is *defective and imperfect*. If John's baptism, which you cry up thus, have any good in it, yonder the baptism of Jesus goes beyond it, so that for your parts you are shaded already by a greater light, and your baptism is soon gone out of request." Thus objections are made against the gospel from the advancement and improvement of

gospel light, as if childhood and manhood were contrary to each other, and the superstructure were against the foundation. There was no reason to object Christ's baptism against John's, for they consisted very well together.

IV. A complaint which John's disciples made to their master concerning Christ and his baptizing, *v. 26*. They, being *nonplussed* by the fore-mentioned objection, and probably *raffled* and put into a heat by it, come to their master, and tell him, "*Rabbi, he that was with thee, and was baptized of thee, is now set up for himself; he baptizeth, and all men come to him; and wilt thou suffer it?*" Their itch for disputing occasioned this. It is common for men, when they find themselves run aground in the heat of disputation, to fall foul upon those that do them no harm. If these disciples of John had not undertaken to dispute about *purifying*, before they understood the *doctrine of baptism*, they might have answered the objection without being put into a passion. In their complaint, they speak respectfully to their own master, *Rabbi*; but speak very slightly of our Saviour, though they do not name him. 1. They suggest that Christ's setting up a baptism of his own was a piece of presumption, very unaccountable; as if John, having first set up this rite of baptizing, must have the monopoly of it, and, as it were, a patent for the invention: "*He that was with thee beyond Jordan, as a disciple of thine, behold, and wonder, the same, the very same, baptizes, and takes thy work out of thy hand.*" Thus the voluntary condescensions of the Lord Jesus, as that of his being baptized by John, are often unjustly and very unkindly turned to his reproach. 2. They suggest that it was a piece of ingratitude to John. He to whom thou barest witness baptizes; as if Jesus owed all his reputation to the honourable character John gave of him, and yet had very unworthily improved it to the prejudice of John. But Christ needed not John's testimony, *ch. v. 36*. He reflected more honour upon John than he received from him, yet thus it is incident to us to think that others are more indebted to us than really they are. And besides, Christ's baptism was not in the least an *impeachment*, but indeed the greatest *improvement*, of John's baptism, which was but to lead the way to Christ's. John was just to Christ, in bearing witness to him; and Christ's answering his testimony did rather enrich than impoverish John's ministry. 3. They conclude that it would be a total eclipse to John's baptism: "*All men come to him; they that used to follow with us now flock after him, it is therefore time for us to look about us.*" It was not indeed strange that *all men came to him*. As far as Christ is *manifested* he will be *magnified*; but why should John's disciples grieve at this? Note, Aiming at the monopoly of honour and respect has been in all ages the bane of

the church, and the shame of its members and ministers; as also a vieing of interests, and a jealousy of rivalry and competition. We mistake if we think that the excelling gifts and graces, and labours and usefulness, of one, are a diminution and disparagement to another that has obtained mercy to be faithful; for the Spirit is a free agent, *dispensing to every one severally as he will*. Paul rejoiced in the usefulness even of those that *opposed him*, Phil. i. 18. We must leave it to God to choose, employ, and honour his own instruments as he pleaseth, and not covet to be *placed alone*.

V. Here is John's answer to this complaint which his disciples made, *v. 27, &c.* His disciples expected that he would have resented this matter as they did; but Christ's *manifestation to Israel* was no *surprise* to John, but what he looked for; it was no *disturbance* to him, but what he wished for. He therefore checked the complaint, as Moses, *Enviest thou for my sake?* and took this occasion to confirm the testimonies he had formerly borne to Christ as superior to him, cheerfully consigning and turning over to him all the interest he had in Israel. In this discourse here, the first minister of the gospel (for so John was) is an excellent pattern to all ministers to *humble themselves* and to *exalt the Lord Jesus*.

1. John here *abases himself in comparison with Christ*, *v. 27—30*. The more others magnify us, the more we must humble ourselves, and fortify ourselves against the temptation of flattery and applause, and the jealousy of our friends for our honour, by remembering our place, and what we are, 1 Cor. iii. 5.

(1.) *John acquiesces* in the divine disposal, and satisfies himself with that (*v. 27*): *A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven, whence every good gift comes* (James i. 17), a general truth very applicable in this case. Different employments are according to the direction of divine Providence, different endowments according to the distribution of the divine grace. *No man can take any true honour to himself*, Heb. v. 4. We have as necessary and constant a dependence upon the grace of God in all the motions and actions of the spiritual life as we have upon the providence of God in all the motions and actions of the natural life: now this comes in here as a reason, [1.] Why we should not *envy* those that have a larger share of gifts than we have, or move in a larger sphere of usefulness. John reminds his disciples that Jesus would not have thus excelled him *except he had received it from heaven*, for, as *man and Mediator*, he *received gifts*; and, if God gave him *the Spirit without measure* (*v. 34*), shall they grudge at it? The same reason will hold as to others. If God is *pleased* to give to others more ability and success than to us, shall we be displeased at it, and reflect upon him as unjust, unwise, and partial? See Matt. xx. 15. [2.] Why we should not be *discontented*, though we be inferior to



others in gifts and usefulness, and be eclipsed by their excellencies. John was ready to own that it was the gift, the free gift, of heaven, that made him a preacher, a prophet, a baptist: it was God that gave him the interest he had in the love and esteem of the people; and, if now his interest decline, God's will be done! He that *gives* may *take*. What we *receive* from heaven we must take as it is *given*. Now John never received a commission for a standing *perpetual* office, but only for a *temporary* one, which must soon expire; and therefore, when he has fulfilled his ministry, he can contentedly see it go out of date. Some give quite another sense of these words: John had taken pains with his disciples, to teach them the reference which his baptism had to Christ, who should come after him, and yet be preferred before him, and do that for them which he could not do; and yet, after all, they dote upon John, and grudge this preference of Christ above him: Well, saith John, I see a man can receive (that is, perceive) *nothing, except it be given him from heaven*. The labour of ministers is all lost labour, unless the grace of God make it effectual. Men do not understand that which is made most *plain*, nor believe that which is made most *evident*, unless it be given them from heaven to understand and believe it.

(2.) John appeals to the testimony he had formerly given concerning Christ (v. 28): You can bear me witness that I said, again and again, *I am not the Christ, but I am sent before him*. See how steady and constant John was in his testimony to Christ, and not as a *reed shaken with the wind*; neither the frowns of the chief priests, nor the flatteries of his own disciples, could make him change his note. Now this serves here, [1.] As a *conviction* to his disciples of the unreasonableness of their complaint. They had spoken of the witness which their master bore to Jesus (v. 26): "Now," saith John, "do you not remember what the testimony was that I did bear? Call that to mind, and you will see your own cavil answered. Did I not say, *I am not the Christ*? Why then do you set me up as a rival with him that is? Did I not say, *I am sent before him*? Why then does it seem strange to you that I should stand by and give way to him?" [2.] It is a *comfort* to himself that he had never *given* his disciples *any occasion* thus to set him up in competition with Christ; but, on the contrary, had particularly *cautioned* them against this mistake, though he might have made a hand of it for himself. It is a satisfaction to faithful ministers when they have done what they could in their places to prevent any extravagances that their people ran into. John had not only not encouraged them to hope that he was the Messiah, but had plainly told them the contrary, which was now a satisfaction to him. It is a common excuse for those who have undue honour

paid them, *Si populus vult decipi, decipiat*—*If the people will be deceived, let them*; but that is an ill maxim for those to go by whose business it is to *undecieve* people. *The lip of truth shall be established*.

(3.) John professes the great satisfaction he had in the advancement of Christ and his interest. He was so far from *regretting* it, as his disciples did, that he *rejoiced* in it. This he expresses (v. 29) by an elegant similitude. [1.] He compares our Saviour to the *bridegroom*: "*He that hath the bride is the bridegroom. Do all men come to him?* It is well, whither else should they go? Has he got the throne in men's affections? Who else should have it? It is his right; to whom should the bride be brought but to the bridegroom?" Christ was prophesied of in the Old Testament as a bridegroom, Ps. xlv. *The Word was made flesh*, that the disparity of nature might not be a *bar* to the *match*. Provision is made for the purifying of the church, that the defilement of sin might be no bar. Christ espouses his church to himself; he *has* the bride, for he has her love, he has her promise; *the church is subject to Christ*. As far as particular souls are devoted to him in faith and love, so far the bridegroom has the bride. [2.] He compares himself to the *friend of the bridegroom*, who attends upon him, to do him honour and service, assists him in prosecuting the match, speaks a good word for him, uses his interest on his behalf, rejoices when the match goes on, and most of all when the point is gained, and he *has the bride*. All that John had done in preaching and baptizing was to introduce him; and, now that he was come, he had what he wished for: *The friend of the bridegroom stands, and hears him*; stands expecting him, and waiting for him; *rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice*, because he is come to the marriage after he had been long expected. Note, *First*, Faithful ministers are friends of the bridegroom, to recommend him to the affections and choice of the children of men; to bring letters and messages from him, for he courts by proxy; and herein they must be faithful to him. *Secondly*, The friends of the bridegroom must *stand, and hear the bridegroom's voice*; must receive instructions from him, and attend his orders; must desire to have proofs of Christ speaking in them, and with them (2 Cor. xiii. 3); that is the *bridegroom's voice*. *Thirdly*, The espousing of souls to Jesus Christ, in faith and love, is the fulfilling of the joy of every good minister. If the day of Christ's espousals be the day of the gladness of his heart (Cant. iii. 11), it cannot but be of theirs too who love him and wish well to his honour and kingdom. Surely they have *no greater joy*.

(4.) He owns it highly fit and necessary that the reputation and interest of Christ should be advanced, and his own diminished

(v. 30): *He must increase, but I must decrease.* If they grieve at the growing greatness of the Lord Jesus, they will have more and more occasion to grieve, as those have that indulge themselves in envy and emulation. John speaks of Christ's increase and his own decrease, not only as *necessary* and *unavoidable*, which could not be *helped* and therefore must be *borne*, but as highly *just* and *agreeable*, and affording him entire satisfaction. [1.] He was *well pleased* to see the kingdom of Christ getting ground: "*He must increase.*" You think he has gained a great deal, but it is nothing to what he will gain." Note, The kingdom of Christ is, and will be, a growing kingdom, like the light of the morning, like the grain of mustard-seed. [2.] He was not at all *displeased* that the effect of this was the diminishing of his own interest: *I must decrease.* Created excellencies are under this law, they *must decrease.* *I have seen an end of all perfection.* Note, *First*, The shining forth of the glory of Christ eclipses the lustre of all other glory. The glory that stands in *competition* with Christ, that of the world and the flesh, decreases and loses ground in the soul as the knowledge and love of Christ increase and get ground; but it is here spoken of that which is *subservient* to him. As the light of the morning increases, that of the morning star decreases. *Secondly*, If our diminution or abasement may but in the least contribute to the advancement of Christ's name, we must cheerfully submit to it, and be content to be *any thing*, to be *nothing*, so that Christ may be *all*.

2. John Baptist here *advances* Christ, and instructs his disciples concerning him, that, instead of grieving that so many come to him, they might come to him themselves.

[1.] He instructs them concerning the *dignity of Christ's person* (v. 31): *He that cometh from above, that cometh from heaven, is above all.* Here, [1.] He supposes his divine origin, that he came *from above*, from *heaven*, which bespeaks not only his divine extraction, but his divine nature. He had a being before his conception, a heavenly being. None but he that came from heaven was fit to show us the will of heaven, or the way to heaven. When God would save man, he *sent from above*. [2.] Hence he infers his sovereign authority: he is *above all*, above all things and all persons, *God over all, blessed for evermore.* It is daring presumption to dispute precedence with him. When we come to speak of the honours of the Lord Jesus, we find they transcend all conception and expression, and we can say but this, *He is above all.* It was said of John Baptist, *There is not a greater among them that are born of women.* But the descent of Christ from heaven put such a dignity upon him as he was not divested of by his being made flesh; still he was *above all*. This he further illustrates by the meanness of those who stood in competition with him: *He that*

*is of the earth, is earthly*, ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς γῆς. ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἵσταται—*He that is of the earth is of the earth*; he that has his origin of the earth has his food out of the earth, has his converse with earthly things, and his concern is for them. Note, *First*, Man has his rise out of the earth; not only Adam at first, but we also still are *formed out of the clay*, Job xxxiii. 6. Look to the rock whence we were newn. *Secondly*, Man's constitution is therefore *earthly*; not only his body frail and mortal, but his soul corrupt and carnal, and its bent and bias strong towards earthly things. The prophets and apostles were of the same mould with other men; they were but *earthen vessels*, though they had a rich treasure lodged in them; and shall these be set up as rivals with Christ? *Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth*; but let them not cope with him that came from heaven.

(2.) Concerning the *excellency* and *certainly of his doctrine*. His disciples were displeased that Christ's preaching was admired, and attended upon, more than his; but he tells them that there was reason enough for it. For,

[1.] He, for his part, *spoke of the earth*, and so do all those that are *of the earth*. The prophets were men and spoke like men; *of themselves* they could not speak but *of the earth*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. The preaching of the prophets and of John was but low and flat compared with Christ's preaching; as heaven is high above the earth, so were his thoughts above theirs. By them God spoke *on earth*, but in Christ he speaketh *from heaven*.

[2.] But he that cometh from heaven is not only in his person, but in his doctrine, above all the prophets that ever lived on earth; none teacheth like him. The doctrine of Christ is here recommended to us,

*First*, As infallibly *sure* and *certain*, and to be entertained accordingly (v. 32): *What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth.* See here, 1. Christ's divine knowledge; he testified nothing but *what he had seen and heard*, what he was perfectly apprized of and thoroughly acquainted with. What he discovered of the divine nature and of the invisible world was what he had *seen*; what he revealed of the mind of God was what he had *heard* immediately from him, and not at second hand. The prophets testified what was made known to them in dreams and visions by the mediation of angels, but not what they had seen and heard. John was the crier's voice, that said, "*Make room for the witness, and keep silence* while the charge is given," but then leaves it to the witness to give in his testimony himself, and the judge to give the charge himself. The gospel of Christ is not a doubtful opinion, like an hypothesis or new notion in philosophy, which every one is at liberty to believe or not; but it is a revelation of the mind of God, which is of *eternal truth* in itself, and of *infinite*



concern to us. 2. His divine grace and goodness: that which he had *seen and heard* he was pleased to make known to us, because he knew it nearly concerned us. What Paul had seen and heard in the third heavens he could not testify (2 Cor. xii. 4), but Christ knew how to utter what he had *seen and heard*. Christ's preaching is here called his *testifying*, to denote, (1.) The *convincing evidence* of it; it was not *reported* as news by hearsay, but it was *testified* as evidence given in court, with great caution and assurance. (2.) The affectionate earnestness of the delivery of it: it was testified with concern and importunity, as Acts xviii. 5.

From the *certainty* of Christ's doctrine, John takes occasion, [1.] To lament the infidelity of the most of men: though he testifies what is infallibly true, yet *no man* receiveth his testimony, that is, very few, next to none, none in comparison with those that refuse it. They receive it not, they will not hear it, they do not heed it, or give credit to it. This he speaks of not only as a matter of *wonder*, that such a testimony should not be received (Who hath believed our report? How stupid and foolish are the greatest part of mankind, what enemies to themselves!) but as matter of *grief*; John's disciples grieved that *all men came to Christ* (v. 26); they thought his followers too many. But John grieves that *no man came to him*; he thought them too few. Note, The unbelief of sinners is the grief of saints. It was for this that St. Paul had *great heaviness*, Rom. ix. 2. [2.] He takes occasion to commend the faith of the chosen remnant (v. 33): *He that hath received his testimony* (and some such there were, though very few) hath *set to his seal that God is true*. God is true, though we do not *set our seal to it*; let God be true, and every man a liar; his truth needs not our faith to support it, but by faith we do ourselves the honour and justice to subscribe to his truth, and hereby God reckons himself honoured. God's promises are all *yea and amen*; by faith we put our *amen* to them, as Rev. xxii. 20. Observe, He that receives the testimony of Christ subscribes not only to the truth of Christ, but to the truth of *God*, for his name is the *Word of God*; the commandments of God and the testimony of Christ are put together, Rev. xii. 17. By believing in Christ we set to our seal, *First*, That God is true to all the promises which he has made *concerning Christ*, that which he spoke by the mouth of *all his holy prophets*; what he *swore to our fathers* is all accomplished, and not one iota or tittle of it fallen to the ground, Luke i. 70, &c. Acts xiii. 32, 33. *Secondly*, That he is true to all the promises he has made *in Christ*; we venture our souls upon God's veracity, being satisfied that he is *true*; we are willing to deal with him *upon trust*, and to quit all in this world for a happiness in reversion and out of sight. By this we greatly honour

God's faithfulness. Whom we give credit to we give honour to.

*Secondly*, It is recommended to us as a *divine doctrine*; not his own, but *his that sent him* (v. 34): *For he whom God hath sent speaketh the word of God*, which he was sent to speak, and enabled to speak; *for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him*. The prophets were as messengers that brought letters from heaven; but Christ came under the character of an *ambassador*, and treats with us as such; for, 1. He spoke the *words of God*; and nothing he said savoured of human infirmity; both substance and language were divine. He proved himself *sent of God* (ch. iii. 2), and therefore his words are to be received as the words of God. By this rule we may try the spirits: those that speak as the *oracles of God*, and prophesy according to the *proportion of faith*, are to be received as *sent of God*. 2. He spoke as no other prophet did; *for God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him*. None can speak the *words of God* without the *Spirit of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. The Old-Testament prophets had the Spirit, and in different degrees, 2 Kings ii. 9, 10. But, whereas God gave them the Spirit by *measure* (1 Cor. xii. 4), he gave him to Christ *without measure*; all fulness dwelt in him, the fulness of the Godhead, an immeasurable fulness. The Spirit was not in Christ as in a vessel, but as in a fountain, as in a bottomless ocean. "The prophets that had the Spirit in a limited manner, only with respect to some particular revelation, sometimes spoke of *themselves*; but he that had the Spirit always residing in him, without stint, always spoke the *words of God*." So Dr. Whitby.

(3.) Concerning the *power and authority* he is *invested with*, which gives him the pre-eminence above all others, and a more excellent name than they.

[1.] He is the *beloved Son of the Father* (v. 35): *The Father loveth the Son*. The prophets were faithful as servants, but Christ as a Son; they were employed as servants, but Christ *beloved* as a son, always *his delight*, Prov. viii. 30. The Father was well pleased in him; not only he *did* love him, but he *doth* love him; he continued his love to him even in his estate of humiliation, loved him never the less for his poverty and sufferings.

[2.] He is *Lord of all*. The Father, as an evidence of his love for him, *hath given all things into his hand*. Love is generous. The Father took such a complacency and had such a confidence in him that he constituted him the great *feoffee in trust* for mankind. Having given him the *Spirit without measure*, he gave him *all things*; for he was hereby qualified to be master and manager of all. Note, It is the honour of Christ, and the unspeakable comfort of all Christians, that the Father hath *given all things into the hands of the Mediator*. *First*, All power; so it is explained, Matt. xxviii. 18. All the works of creation being put under his feet, all the

affairs of redemption are put into his hand; he is Lord of all. Angels are his servants; devils are his captives. He has *power over all flesh*, the heathen given him for his inheritance. The kingdom of providence is committed to his administration. He has power to settle the terms of the covenant of peace as the great plenipotentiary, to govern his church as the great lawgiver, to dispense divine favours as the great almoner, and to call all to account as the great Judge. Both the golden sceptre and the iron rod are given into his hand. Secondly, All grace is given into his hand as the channel of conveyance; all things, all those good things which God intended to give to the children of men; eternal life, and all its preliminaries. We are unworthy that the Father should give those things into our hands, for we have made ourselves the children of his wrath; he hath therefore appointed the Son of his love to be trustee for us, and the things he intended for us he gives into his hands, who is worthy, and has merited both honours for himself and favours for us. They are given into his hands, by him to be given into ours. This is a great encouragement to faith, that the riches of the new covenant are deposited in so sure, so kind, so good a hand, the hand of him that purchased them for us, and us for himself, who is able to keep all that which both God and believers have agreed to commit to him.

[3.] He is the object of that faith which is made the great condition of eternal happiness, and herein he has the pre-eminence above all others: *He that believeth on the Son, hath life*, v. 36. We have here the application of what he had said concerning Christ and his doctrine; and it is the conclusion of the whole matter. If God has put this honour upon the Son, we must by faith give honour to him. As God offers and conveys good things to us by the testimony of Jesus Christ, whose word is the vehicle of divine favours, so we receive and partake of those favours by believing the testimony, and entertaining that word as true and good; this way of receiving fitly answers that way of giving. We have here the sum of that gospel which is to be preached to every creature, Mark xvi. 16. Here is,

First, The blessed state of all true Christians: *He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life*. Note, 1. It is the character of every true Christian that he believes on the Son of God; not only believes him, that what he saith is true, but believes on him, consents to him, and confides in him. The benefit of true Christianity is no less than everlasting life; this is what Christ came to purchase for us and confer upon us; it can be no less than the happiness of an immortal soul in an immortal God. 2. True believers, even now, have everlasting life; not only they shall have it hereafter, but they have it now. For, (1.) They have very good security for it. The deed by which it passeth is sealed and

delivered to them, and so they have it; it is put into the hands of their guardian for them, and so they have it, though the use be not yet transferred into possession. They have the Son of God, and in him they have life; and the Spirit of God, the earnest of this life. (2.) They have the comfortable foretastes of it, in present communion with God and the tokens of his love. Grace is glory begun.

Secondly, The wretched and miserable condition of unbelievers: *He that believeth not the Son* is undone, *ὁ ἀπείθεω*. The word includes both incredulity and disobedience. An unbeliever is one that gives not credit to the doctrine of Christ, nor is in subjection to the government of Christ. Now those that will neither be taught nor ruled by Christ, 1. They cannot be happy in this world, nor that to come: *He shall not see life*, that life which Christ came to bestow. He shall not enjoy it, he shall not have any comfortable prospect of it, shall never come within ken of it, except to aggravate his loss of it. 2. They cannot but be miserable: *The wrath of God abides upon an unbeliever*. He is not only under the wrath of God, which is as surely the soul's death as his favour is its life, but it abides upon him. All the wrath he has made himself liable to by the violation of the law, if not removed by the grace of the gospel, is bound upon him. God's wrath for his daily actual transgressions lights and lies upon him. Old scores lie undischarged, and new ones are added: something is done every day to fill the measure, and nothing to empty it. Thus the wrath of God abides, for it is treasured up against the day of wrath.

## CHAP. IV.

It was, more than any thing else, the glory of the land of Israel, that it was Emmanuel's land (Isa. viii. 8), not only the place of his birth, but the scene of his preaching and miracles. This land in our Saviour's time was divided into three parts: Judea in the south, Galilee in the north, and Samaria lying between them. Now, in this chapter, we have Christ in each of these three parts of that land. 1. Departing out of Judea, ver. 1-3. 11. Passing through Samaria, which, though a visit in transitu, here takes up most room. 1. His coming into Samaria, ver. 4-6. 2. His discourse with the Samaritan woman at a well, ver. 7-26. 3. The notice which the woman gave of him to the city, ver. 27-30. 4. Christ's talk with his disciples in the mean time, ver. 31-33. 5. The good effect of this among the Samaritans, ver. 39-42. III. We find him residing for some time in Galilee (ver. 43-46), and his curing a nobleman's son there, that was at death's door, ver. 46-54.

WHEN therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) 3 He left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee.

We read of Christ's coming into Judea (ch. iii. 22), after he had kept the feast at Jerusalem; and now he left Judea four months before harvest, as is said here (v. 35); so that it is computed that he staid in Judea about six months, to build upon the foundation John had laid there. We have no particular account of his sermons and miracles there, only in general, v. 1.



I. That he *made disciples*; he prevailed with many to embrace his doctrine, and to follow him as a teacher come from God. His ministry was successful, notwithstanding the opposition it met with (Ps. cx. 2, 3); *μαθητὰς ποιοῦν*—it signifies the same with *μαθητεύω*—to *disciple*. Compare Gen. xii. 5. *The souls which they had gotten*, which they had *made* (so the word is), which they had *made proselytes*. Note, It is Christ's prerogative to *make disciples*, first to bring them to his foot, and then to form and fashion them to his will. *Fili, non nascitur, Christianus*—*The Christian is made such, not born such*. Tertullian.

II. That he *baptized* those whom he *made disciples*, admitted them by *washing them with water*; not himself, but by the ministry of his disciples, v. 2. 1. Because he would put a difference between his baptism and that of John, who baptized all himself; for he baptized as a servant, Christ as a master. 2. He would apply himself more to preaching work, which was the more excellent, 1 Cor. i. 17. 3. He would put honour upon his disciples, by empowering and employing them to do it; and so train them up to further services. 4. If he had baptized some himself, they would have been apt to value themselves upon that, and despise others, which he would prevent, as Paul, 1 Cor. i. 13, 14. 5. He would reserve himself for the honour of baptizing with the Holy Ghost, Acts i. 5. 6. He would teach us that the efficacy of the sacraments depends not on any virtue in the hand that administers them, as also that what is done by his ministers, according to his direction, he owns as done by himself.

III. That he *made and baptized more disciples than John*; not only more than John did at this time, but more than he had done at any time. Christ's converse was more winning than John's. His miracles were convincing, and the cures he wrought *gratis* very inviting.

IV. That the Pharisees were informed of this; they heard what multitudes he baptized, for they had, from his first appearing, a jealous eye upon him, and wanted not spies to give them notice concerning him. Observe, 1. When the Pharisees thought they had got rid of John (for he was by this time imprisoned), and were pleasing themselves with that, Jesus appears, who was a greater vexation to them than ever John had been. The witnesses will rise again. 2. That which grieved them was that Christ made so many disciples. The success of the gospel exasperates its enemies, and it is a good sign that it is getting ground when the powers of darkness are enraged against it.

V. That our Lord Jesus knew very well what informations were given in against him to the Pharisees. It is probable the informers were willing to have their names concealed, and the Pharisees loth to have their designs known; but none can dig so deep as to *hide their counsels from the Lord* (Isa. xxix. 15).

and Christ is here called *the Lord*. He knew what was told the Pharisees, and how much, it is likely, it exceeded the truth; for it is not likely that Jesus had yet baptized *more than John*; but so the thing was represented, to make him appear the more formidable; see 2 Kings vi. 12.

VI. That hereupon our Lord Jesus *left Judea and departed again* to go to Galilee.

1. He *left Judea*, because he was likely to be persecuted there even to the death; such was the rage of the Pharisees against him, and such their impious policy to devour the man-child in his infancy. To escape their designs, Christ quitted the country, and went where what he did would be less provoking than just under their eye. For, (1.) His hour was not yet come (*ch. vii. 30*), the time fixed in the counsels of God, and the Old-Testament prophecies, for Messiah's being cut off. He had not finished his testimony, and therefore would not surrender or expose himself. (2.) The disciples he had gathered in Judea were not able to bear hardships, and therefore he would not expose them. (3.) Hereby he gave an example to his own rule: *When they persecute you in one city, flee to another*. We are not called to suffer, while we may avoid it without sin; and therefore, though we may not, for our own preservation, change our religion, yet we may change our place. Christ secured himself, not by a miracle, but in a way *common to men*, for the direction and encouragement of his suffering people.

2. He departed into Galilee, because he had work to do there, and many friends and fewer enemies. He went to Galilee now, (1.) Because John's ministry had now *made way* for him there; for Galilee, which was under Herod's jurisdiction, was the last scene of John's baptism. (2.) Because John's imprisonment had now *made room* for him there. That light being now put under a bushel, the minds of people would not be divided between him and Christ. Thus both the liberties and restraints of good ministers are for the furtherance of the gospel, Phil. i. 12. But to what purpose does he go into Galilee for safety? Herod, the persecutor of John, will never be the protector of Jesus. Chermannitius here notes, *Pii in hac vitâ quos fugiant habent; ad quos vero fugiant ut in tuto sint non habent, nisi ad te, Deus, qui solus refugium nostrum es*—*The pious have those, in this life, to whom they can fly; but they have none to fly to, who can afford them refuge, except thee, O God*.

4 And he must needs go through Samaria. 5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with *his journey*, sat thus on the well: *and it was*

about the sixth hour. 7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water : Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. 8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) 9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. 11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? 12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? 13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. 15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. 17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: 18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. 19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the

Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. 25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

We have here an account of the good Christ did in Samaria, when he *passed through* that country in his way to Galilee. The Samaritans, both in *blood* and *religion*, were *mongrel Jews*, the posterity of those colonies which the king of Assyria planted there after the captivity of the ten tribes, with whom the poor of the land that were left behind, and many other Jews afterwards, incorporated themselves. They worshipped the God of Israel only, to whom they erected a temple on mount Gerizim, in competition with that at Jerusalem. There was great enmity between them and the Jews; the Samaritans would not admit Christ, when they saw he was going to Jerusalem (Luke ix. 53); the Jews thought they could not give him a worse name than to say, *He is a Samaritan*. When the Jews were in prosperity, the Samaritans claimed kindred to them (Ezra iv. 2), but, when the Jews were in distress, they were Medes and Persians; see *Joseph. Antiq. lib. xi. cap. 8, lib. xii. cap. 7*. Now observe,

I. Christ's coming into Samaria. He charged his disciples not to *enter into any city of the Samaritans* (Matt. x. 5), that is, not to preach the gospel, or work miracles; nor did he here preach publicly, or work any miracle, his eye being to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*. What kindness he here did them was *accidental*; it was only a *crumb* of the children's bread that casually *fell from the master's table*.

1. His road from Judea to Galilee lay through the country of Samaria (v. 4): *He must needs go through Samaria*. There was no other way, unless he would have fetched a compass on the other side *Jordan*, a great way about. The wicked and profane are at present so intermixed with God's Israel that, unless we will go *out of the world*, we cannot avoid going through the company of such, 1 Cor. v. 10. We have therefore need of the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, that we may neither give *provocation* to them nor contract *pollution* by them. We should not go into places of temptation but when we *needs must*; and then we should not reside in them, but *hasten through* them. Some think that Christ *must needs* go through Samaria because of the good work he had to do there; a poor woman to be converted, a lost sheep to be sought and saved. This was work his heart was upon, and therefore he *must needs* go this



way. It was happy for Samaria that it lay in Christ's way, which gave him an opportunity of calling on them. *When I passed by thee, I said unto thee, Live*, Ezek. xvi. 6.

2. His baiting place happened to be at a city of Samaria. Now observe,

(1.) The place described. It was called *Sychar*; probably the same with *Sichem*, or *Shechem*, a place which we read much of in the Old Testament. Thus are the names of places commonly corrupted by tract of time. Shechem yielded the first proselyte that ever came into the church of Israel (Gen. xxxiv. 24), and now it is the first place where the gospel is preached out of the commonwealth of Israel; so Dr. Lightfoot observes; as also that the valley of *Achor*, which was given for a door of hope, hope to the poor Gentiles, ran along by this city, Hos. ii. 15. Abimelech was made king here; it was Jeroboam's royal seat; but the evangelist, when he would give us the antiquities of the place, takes notice of Jacob's interest there, which was more its honour than its crowned heads.

[1.] Here lay Jacob's ground, the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph, whose bones were buried in it, Gen. xlviii. 22; Josh. xxiv. 32. Probably this is mentioned to intimate that Christ, when he reposed himself hard by here, took occasion from the ground which Jacob gave Joseph to meditate on the good report which the elders by faith obtained. Jerome chose to live in the land of Canaan, that the sight of the places might affect him the more with scripture stories. [2.] Here was Jacob's well which he digged, or at least used, for himself and his family. We find no mention of this well in the Old Testament; but the tradition was that it was Jacob's well.

(2.) The posture of our Lord Jesus at this place: *Being wearied with his journey, he sat thus on the well*. We have here our Lord Jesus,

[1.] Labouring under the common fatigue of travellers. He was *wearied with his journey*. Though it was yet but the sixth hour, and he had performed but half his day's journey, yet he was weary; or, because it was the sixth hour, the time of the heat of the day, therefore he was weary. Here we see, *First*, That he was a true man, and subject to the common infirmities of the human nature. Toil came in with sin (Gen. iii. 19), and therefore Christ, having made himself a curse for us, submitted to it. *Secondly*, That he was a poor man, else he might have travelled on horseback or in a chariot. To this instance of meanness and mortification he humbled himself for us, that he went all his journeys on foot. When servants were on horses, princes walked as servants on the earth, Eccl. x. 7. When we are carried easily, let us think on the weariness of our Master. *Thirdly*, It should seem that he was but a tender man, and not of a robust constitution; it should seem, his disciples were not tired,

for they went into the town without any difficulty, when their Master sat down, and could not go a step further. Bodies of the finest mould are most sensible of fatigue, and can worst bear it.

[2.] We have him here betaking himself to the common relief of travellers: *Being wearied, he sat thus on the well*. *First*, He sat on the well, an uneasy place, cold and hard; he had no couch, no easy chair to repose himself in, but took to that which was next hand, to teach us not to be nice and curious in the conveniences of this life, but content with mean things. *Secondly*, He sat thus, in an uneasy posture; sat carelessly—*incuriose et neglectim*; or he sat so as people that are wearied with travelling are accustomed to sit.

II. His discourse with a Samaritan woman, which is here recorded at large, while Christ's dispute with the doctors, and his discourse with Moses and Elias on the mount, are buried in silence. This discourse is reducible to four heads:—

1. They discourse concerning the water, v. 7—15.

(1.) Notice is taken of the circumstances that gave occasion to this discourse.

[1.] There comes a woman of Samaria to draw water. This intimates her poverty, she had no servant to be a drawer of water; and her industry, she would do it herself. See here, *First*, How God owns and approves of honest humble diligence in our places. Christ was made known to the shepherds when they were keeping their flock. *Secondly* How the divine Providence brings about glorious purposes by events which seem to us fortuitous and accidental. This woman's meeting with Christ at the well may remind us of the stories of Rebekah, Rachel, and Jethro's daughter, who all met with husbands, good husbands, no worse than Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, when they came to the wells for water. *Thirdly*, How the preventing grace of God sometimes brings people unexpectedly under the means of conversion and salvation. He is found of them that sought him not.

[2.] His disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat. Hence learn a lesson, *First*, Of justice and honesty. The meat Christ ate, he bought and paid for, as Paul, 2 Thess. iii. 8. *Secondly*, Of daily dependence upon Providence: *Take no thought for the morrow*. Christ did not go into the city to eat, but sent his disciples to fetch his meat thither; not because he scrupled eating in a Samaritan city, but, 1. Because he had a good work to do at that well, which might be done while they were catering. It is wisdom to fill up our vacant minutes with that which is good, that the fragments of time may not be lost. Peter, while his dinner was getting ready, fell into a trance, Acts x. 10. 2. Because it was more private and retired, more cheap and homely, to have his dinner

brought him hither, than to go into the town for it. Perhaps his purse was low, and he would teach us *good husbandry*, to *spend* according to what we *have* and not go beyond it. At least, he would teach us not to affect great things. Christ could eat his dinner as well upon a *draw well* as in the best inn in the town. Let us *comport* with our circumstances. Now this gave Christ an opportunity of discoursing with this woman about spiritual concerns, and he improved it; he often preached to multitudes that crowded after him for instruction, yet here he condescends to teach a single person, a woman, a poor woman, a stranger, a Samaritan, to teach his ministers to do likewise, as those that know what a glorious achievement it is to help to save, though but *one soul*, from death.

(2.) Let us observe the *particulars* of this discourse.

[1.] Jesus begins with a modest request for a draught of water: *Give me to drink*. He that *for our sakes became poor* here becomes a beggar, that those who are in want, and cannot dig, may not be ashamed to beg. Christ asked for it, not only because he needed it, and needed her help to come at it, but because he would draw on further discourse with her, and teach us to be willing to be beholden to the meanest when there is occasion. Christ is still *begging* in his poor members, and a *cup of cold water*, like this here, given to them in his name, shall not lose its reward.

[2.] The woman, though she does not deny his request, yet quarrels with him because he did not carry on the humour of his own nation (v. 9): *How is it?* Observe, *First*, What a mortal feud there was between the Jews and the Samaritans: *The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*. The Samaritans were the *adversaries of Judah* (Ezra iv. 1), were upon all occasions mischievous to them. The Jews were extremely malicious against the Samaritans, "looked upon them as having no part in the resurrection, excommunicated and cursed them by the sacred name of God, by the glorious writing of the tables, and by the curse of the upper and lower house of judgment, with this law, That no Israelite eat of any thing that is a Samaritan's, for it is as if he should eat swine's flesh." So Dr. Lightfoot, out of *Rabbi Tanchum*. Note, Quarrels about religion are usually the most implacable of all quarrels. Men were made to *have dealings* one with another; but if men, because one worships at one temple and another at another, will deny the offices of humanity, and charity, and common civility, will be morose and unnatural, scornful and censorious, and this under colour of zeal for religion, they plainly show that however their religion may be *true* they are not *truly religious*; but, pretending to stickle for religion, subvert the design of it. *Secondly*, How ready the woman was to upbraid Christ with the

haughtiness and ill nature of the Jewish nation: *How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me?* By his dress or dialect, or both, she knew him to be a Jew, and *thinks it strange* that he runs not to the same excess of riot against the Samaritans with other Jews. Note, Moderate men of all sides are, like Joshua and his fellows (Zech. iii. 8), *men wondered at*. Two things this woman wonders at, 1. That he should *ask* this kindness; for it was the pride of the Jews that they would endure any hardship rather than be beholden to a Samaritan. It was part of Christ's humiliation that he was born of the Jewish nation, which was *now* not only in an *ill state*, subject to the Romans, but in an *ill name* among the nations. With what disdain did Pilate ask, *Am I a Jew?* Thus he *made himself* not only *of no reputation*, but of *ill reputation*; but herein he has set us an example of swimming against the stream of common corruptions. We must, like our Master, put on *goodness* and *kindness*, though it should be ever so much the genius of our country, or the humour of our party, to be morose and ill-natured. This woman expected that Christ should be as other Jews were; but it is unjust to charge upon every individual person even the common faults of the community: no rule but has some exceptions. 2. She wonders that he should *expect to receive* this kindness from her that was a Samaritan: "You Jews could deny it to one of our nation, and why should we grant it to one of yours?" Thus quarrels are propagated endlessly by revenge and retaliation.

[3.] Christ takes this occasion to instruct her in divine things: *If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked*, v. 10. Observe,

*First*, He waives her objection of the feud between the Jews and Samaritans, and takes no notice of it. Some differences are best *healed* by being *slighted*, and by avoiding all occasions of *entering into dispute* about them. Christ will convert this woman, not by showing her that the Samaritan worship was *schismatical* (though really it was so), but by showing her her own ignorance and immoralities, and her need of a Saviour.

*Secondly*, He fills her with an apprehension that she had now an opportunity (a fairer opportunity than she was aware of) of gaining that which would be of unspeakable advantage to her. She had not the helps that the Jews had to discern the signs of the times, and therefore Christ tells her expressly that she had now a season of grace; this was *the day of her visitation*.

*a*. He hints to her what she *should know*, but was ignorant of: *If thou knewest the gift of God*, that is, as the next words explain it, *who it is that saith, Give me to drink*. If thou knewest *who I am*. She saw him to be a Jew, a poor weary traveller; but he would have her know something more concerning him than did yet appear. Note, (*a.*) Jesus Christ



is the *gift of God*, the richest token of God's love to us, and the richest treasure of all good for us; a *gift*, not a debt which we could demand from God; not a *loan*, which he will demand from us again, but a gift, a free gift, *ch. iii. 16.* (b.) It is an unspeakable privilege to have this gift of God proposed and offered to us; to have an opportunity of embracing it: "He who is the gift of God is now set before thee, and addresses himself to thee; it is he that saith, *Give me to drink*; this gift comes a begging to thee." (c.) Though Christ is set before us, and sues to us in and by his gospel, yet there are multitudes that *know him not*. They know not who it is that speaks to them in the gospel, that saith, *Give me to drink*; they perceive not that it is the Lord that calls them.

b. He hopes concerning her, what she would have done if she had known him; to be sure she would not have given him such a rude and uncivil answer; nay, she would have been so far from affronting him that she would have made her addresses to him: *Thou wouldest have asked*. Note, (a.) Those that would have any benefit by Christ must ask for it, must be earnest in prayer to God for it. (b.) Those that have a right knowledge of Christ will seek to him, and if we do not seek unto him it is a sign that we do not know him, *Ps. ix. 10.* (c.) Christ knows what they that want the means of knowledge would have done if they had had them, *Matt. xi. 21.*

c. He assures her what he would have done for her if she had applied to him: "He would have given thee (and not have upbraided thee as thou dost me) *living water*." By this living water is meant the *Spirit*, who is not like the water in the bottom of the well, for some of which he asked, but like *living* or *running* water, which was much more valuable. Note, (a.) The Spirit of grace is as *living water*; see *ch. vii. 38.* Under this similitude the blessings of the Messiah had been promised in the Old Testament, *Isa. xii. 3*; *xxxv. 7*; *xliv. 3*; *lv. 1*; *Zech. xiv. 8.* The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul, that knows its own nature and necessity. (b.) Jesus Christ *can* and *will* give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; for he *received* that he might *give*.

[4.] The woman objects against and cavils at the gracious intimation which Christ gave her (*v. 11, 12*): *Thou hast nothing to draw with*; and besides, *Art thou greater than our father Jacob*? What he spoke figuratively, she took literally; Nicodemus did so too. See what confused notions they have of spiritual things who are wholly taken up with the things that are sensible. Some respect she pays to his person, in calling him *Sir*, or *Lord*; but little respect to what he said, which she does but banter.

First, She does not think him capable of furnishing her with any water, no, not this in the well that is just at hand: *Thou hast nothing to draw with*, and *the well is deep*. This

she said, not knowing the power of Christ: for he who *causeth the vapours* to ascend from the ends of the earth needs *nothing to draw*. But there are those who will trust Christ no further than they can see him, and will not believe his promise, unless the means of the performance of it be *visible*; as if he were tied to our methods, and could not draw water without our buckets. She asks scornfully, *"Whence hast thou this living water?"* I see not whence thou canst have it." Note, The springs of that living water which Christ has for those that come to him are secret and undiscovered. The fountain of life is hid with Christ. Christ has enough for us, though we see not whence he has it.

Secondly, She does not think it possible that he should furnish her with any better water than this which she could come at, but he could not: *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well?*

a. We will suppose the tradition true, that Jacob himself, and his children, and cattle, did drink of this well. And we may observe from it, (a.) The power and providence of God, in the continuance of the fountains of water from generation to generation, by the constant circulation of the rivers, like the blood in the body (*Ecc. i. 7*), to which circulation perhaps the flux and reflux of the sea, like the pulses of the heart, contribute. (b.) The plainness of the patriarch Jacob; his drink was water, and he and his children drank of the same well with his cattle.

b. Yet, allowing that to be true, she was out in several things; as, (a.) In calling Jacob *father*. What authority had the Samaritans to reckon themselves of the seed of Jacob? They were descended from that mixed multitude which the king of Assyria had placed in the cities of Samaria; what have they to do then with Jacob? Because they were the *invaders* of Israel's rights, and the unjust possessors of Israel's lands, were they therefore the *inheritors* of Israel's blood and honour? How absurd were those pretensions! (b.) She is out in claiming this well as Jacob's gift, whereas he did no more give it than Moses gave the *manna*, *ch. vi. 32*. But thus we are apt to call the *messengers* of God's gifts the *donors* of them, and to look so much at the hands they *pass through* as to forget the hand they *come from*. Jacob gave it to his sons, not to *them*. Yet thus the church's enemies not only *usurp*, but monopolize, the church's privileges. (c.) She was out in speaking of Christ as not worthy to be compared with our father Jacob. An over-fond veneration for antiquity makes God's graces, in the good people of our own day, to be slighted.

[5.] Christ answers this cavil, and makes it out that the *living water* he had to give was far better than that of Jacob's well, *v. 13, 14*. Though she spoke perversely, Christ did not cast her off, but instructed and encouraged her. He shows her,

First, That the water of Jacob's well yielded but a *transient* satisfaction and supply: "*Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again.*" It is no better than other water; it will quench the present thirst, but the thirst will return, and in a few hours a man will have as much *need*, and as much *desire*, of water as ever he had." This intimates, 1. The *infirmities* of our bodies in this present state; they are still *necessitous*, and ever *craving*. Life is a *fire*, a *lamp*, which will soon go out, without continual supplies of fuel and oil. The natural heat preys upon itself. 2. The *imperfections* of all our comforts in this world; they are not lasting, nor our satisfaction in them remaining. Whatever waters of comfort we drink of, we shall *thirst again*. Yesterday's meat and drink will not do to-day's work.

Secondly, That the living waters he would give should yield a lasting satisfaction and bliss, *v. 14*. Christ's gifts appear most valuable when they come to be compared with the things of this world; for there will appear no comparison between them. Whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the everlasting gospel,

a. He shall *never thirst*, he shall never want that which will abundantly satisfy his soul's desires; they are *longing*, but not *languishing*. A *desiring* thirst he has, nothing more *than* God, still more and more *of* God; but not a *despairing* thirst.

b. Therefore he shall never thirst, because this water that Christ gives *shall be in him a well of water*. He can never be reduced to extremity that has in himself a *fountain* of supply and satisfaction. (a.) *Ever ready*, for it shall be *in him*. The principle of grace planted in him is the spring of his comfort; see *ch. vii. 38*. A good man is *satisfied from himself*, for Christ *dwells in his heart*. The anointing abides in him; he needs not sneak to the world for comfort; the *work* and the *witness* of the Spirit in the heart furnish him with a firm foundation of hope and an overflowing fountain of joy. (b.) *Never failing*, for it shall be in him a *well of water*. He that has at hand only a bucket of water needs not thirst as long as this lasts, but it will soon be *exhausted*; but believers have in them a *well of water*, overflowing, ever flowing. The *principles* and *affections* which Christ's holy religion *forms* in the souls of those that are brought under the power of it are this *well of water*. [a.] It is *springing up*, ever in motion, which bespeaks the actings of grace strong and vigorous. If good truths *stagnate* in our souls, like standing water, they do not answer the end of our receiving them. If there be a good treasure in the heart, we must thence bring forth good things. [b.] It is *springing up unto everlasting life*; which intimates, *First*, The *aims* of gracious actings. A sanctified soul has its eye upon heaven, means this, designs this, does all for this, will take up with nothing short of this. Spiritual

life springs up towards its own perfection in eternal life. *Secondly*, The *constancy* of those actings; it will continue springing up till it come to perfection. *Thirdly*, The crown of them, eternal life at last. The living water rises *from* heaven, and therefore rises *towards* heaven; see *Eccl. i. 7*. And now is not this water better than that of Jacob's well?

[6.] The woman (whether in jest or earnest is hard to say) begs of him to give her some of this water (*v. 15*): *Give me this water, that I thirst not*. *First*, Some think that she speaks *tauntingly*, and ridicules what Christ had said as mere stuff; and, in derision of it, not *desires*, but *challenges* him to give her some of this water: "A rare invention; it will save me a great deal of *pain* if I *thirst not*, and a great deal of *pains* if I never come *hither to draw*." But, *Secondly*, Others think that it was a *well-meant* but weak and ignorant desire. She apprehended that he meant something very good and useful, and therefore saith *Amen*, at a venture. *Whatever it be*, let me have it; *who will show me any good?* *Ease*, or saving of labour, is a valuable good to poor labouring people. Note, 1. Even those that are weak and ignorant may yet have some faint and fluctuating desires towards Christ and his gifts, and some good wishes of grace and glory. 2. Carnal hearts, in their best wishes, look no higher than carnal ends. "Give it to me," saith she, "not that I may have everlasting life" (which Christ proposed), "but that I come not *hither to draw*."

2. The next subject of discourse with this woman is *concerning her husband*, *v. 16—18*. It was not to let fall the discourse of the water of life that Christ started this, as many who will bring in any *impertinence* in conversation that they may drop a serious subject; but it was with a gracious design that Christ mentioned it. What he had said concerning his grace and eternal life he found had made little impression upon her, because she had not been convinced of sin: therefore, waiving the discourse about the living water, he sets himself to awaken her conscience, to open the wound of guilt, and then she would more easily apprehend the remedy by grace. And this is the method of dealing with souls; they must first be made *weary* and *heavy-laden* under the burden of sin, and then brought to Christ for rest; first pricked to the heart, and then healed. This is the course of spiritual physic; and if we proceed not in this order we begin at the wrong end.

Observe, (1.) How discreetly and decently Christ introduces this discourse (*v. 16*): *Go, call thy husband, and come hither*. Now, [1.] The order Christ gave her had a *very good colour*: "Call thy husband, that he may teach thee, and help thee to understand these things, which thou art so ignorant of." The wives that will learn must *ask their husbands* (1 Cor. xiv. 35), who must dwell with them *as men of knowledge*, 1 Pet. iii. 7 "Call thy hus-



*band*, that he may learn with thee; that then you may be *heirs together of the grace of life*. *Call thy husband*, that he may be witness to what passes between us." Christ would thus teach us to *provide things honest in the sight of all men*, and to study that which is of good report. [2.] As it had a good colour, so it had a *good design*; for hence he would take occasion to call her sin to remembrance. There is need of art and prudence in giving reproofs; to fetch a compass, as the woman of Tekoa, 2 Sam. xiv. 20.

(2.) How industriously the woman seeks to evade the conviction, and yet insensibly convicts herself, and, ere she is aware, owns her fault; she said, *I have no husband*. Her saying this intimated no more than that she did not care to have her husband spoken of, nor that matter mentioned any more. She would not have her husband come thither, lest, in further discourse, the truth of the matter should come out, to her shame; and therefore, "Pray go on to talk of something else, *I have no husband*;" she would be thought a *maid* or a *widow*, whereas, though she had no husband, she was neither. The carnal mind is very ingenious to *shift off* convictions, and to keep them from fastening, careful to *cover the sin*.

(3.) How closely our Lord Jesus brings home the conviction to her conscience. It is probable that he said more than is here recorded, for she thought that he told her all that ever she did (v. 29), but that which is here recorded is concerning her husbands. Here is, [1.] A *surprising narrative* of her *past conversation*: *Thou hast had five husbands*. Doubtless, it was not her *affliction* (the burying of so many husbands), but her *sin*, that Christ intended to upbraid her with; either she had *eloped* (as the law speaks), had run away from her *husbands*, and married others, or by her undutiful, unclean, disloyal conduct, had provoked them to *divorce her*, or by indirect means had, contrary to law, *divorced them*. Those who make light of such scandalous practices as these, as no more than *nine days' wonder*, and as if the guilt were over as soon as the talk is over, should remember that Christ keeps account of all. [2.] A severe reproof of her present state of life: *He whom thou now hast is not thy husband*. Either she was never married to him at all, or he had some other wife, or, which is most probable, her former husband or husbands were living: so that, in short, *she lived in adultery*. Yet observe how mildly Christ tells her of it; he doth not call her *strumpet*, but tells her, *He with whom thou livest is not thy husband*: and then leaves it to her own conscience to say the rest. Note, Reproofs are ordinarily most *profitable* when they are *least provoking*. [3.] Yet in this he puts a better construction than it would well bear upon what she said by way of shuffle and evasion: *Thou hast well said I have no husband*; and again, *In that saidst thou truly*

What she intended as a *denial of the fact* (that she had none with whom she lived as a husband) he favourably interpreted, or at least turned upon her, as a *confession of the fault*. Note, Those who would win souls should *make the best* of them, whereby they may hope to *work upon their good-nature*; for, if they *make the worst* of them, they certainly *exasperate their ill-nature*.

3. The next subject of discourse with this woman is concerning *the place of worship*, v. 19—24. Observe,

(1.) A case of conscience proposed to Christ by the woman, concerning the place of worship, v. 19, 20.

[1.] The inducement she had to put this case: *Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet*. She does not deny the truth of what he had charged her with, but by her silence owns the justice of the reproof; nor is she put into a passion by it, as many are when they are touched in a sore place, does not impute his censure to the general disgust the Jews had to the Samaritans, but (which is a rare thing) can bear to be told of a fault. But this is not all; she goes further: *First*, She speaks respectfully to him, calls him *Sir*. Thus should we *honour* those that deal faithfully with us. This was the effect of Christ's meekness in reproving her; he gave her no ill language, and then she gave him none. *Secondly*, She acknowledges him to be a *prophet*, one that had a correspondence with Heaven. Note, The power of the word of Christ in searching the heart, and convincing the conscience of secret sins, is a great proof of its divine authority, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. *Thirdly*, She desires some further instruction from him. Many that are not *angry* at their reprovers, nor fly in their faces, yet are *afraid* of them and keep out of their way; but this woman was willing to have some more discourse with him that told her of her faults.

[2.] The case itself that she propounded concerning *the place of religious worship in public*. Some think that she started this to shift off further discourse concerning her sin. Controversies in religion often prove great prejudices to serious godliness; but, it should seem, she proposed it with a good design; she knew she must worship God, and desired to do it aright; and therefore, meeting with a prophet, begs his direction. Note, It is our wisdom to improve all opportunities of getting kn, wledge in the things of God. When we are in company with those that are *fit to teach*, let us be *forward to learn*, and have a *good question* ready to put to those who are able to give a *good answer*. It was agreed between the Jews and the Samaritans that God is to be worshipped (even those who were such fools as to worship false gods were not such brutes as to worship none) and that religious worship is an affair of great importance: men would not *contend* about it if they were not *concerned* about it. But the matter in variance was *where* they should

worship God. Observe how she states the case:—

*First*, As for the Samaritans: *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain*, near to this city and this well; there the Samaritan temple was built by Sanballat, in favour of which she insinuates, 1. That whatever the temple was the place was holy; it was mount *Gerizim*, the mount on which the blessings were pronounced; and some think the same on which Abraham built his altar (Gen. xii. 6, 7), and Jacob his, Gen. xxxiii. 18—20. 2. That it might plead prescription: *Our fathers worshipped here*. She thinks they have antiquity, tradition, and succession, on their side. A *vain conversation* often supports itself with this, that it was *received by tradition from our fathers*. But she had little reason to boast of *their fathers*; for, when Antiochus persecuted the Jews, the Samaritans, for fear of sharing with them in their sufferings, not only renounced all relation to the Jews, but surrendered their temple to Antiochus, with a request that it might be dedicated to Jupiter Olympius, and called by his name. *Joseph. Antiq. lib. xii. cap. 7.*

*Secondly*, As to the Jews: *You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship*. The Samaritans governed themselves by the five books of Moses, and (some think) received *only them* as canonical. Now, though they found frequent mention there of the place God would choose, yet they did not find it named there; and they saw the temple at Jerusalem stripped of many of its ancient glories, and therefore thought themselves at liberty to set up another place, altar against altar.

(2.) Christ's answer to this case of conscience, v. 21, &c. Those that apply themselves to Christ for instruction shall find him meek, to teach the meek his way. Now here,

[1.] He puts a *slight* upon the question, as she had proposed it, concerning the place of worship (v. 21): "*Woman, believe me as a prophet, and mark what I say. Thou art expecting the hour to come when either by some divine revelation, or some signal providence, this matter shall be decided in favour either of Jerusalem or of Mount Gerizim; but I tell thee the hour is at hand when it shall be no more a question; that which thou hast been taught to lay so much weight on shall be set aside as a thing indifferent.*" Note, It should cool us in our contests to think that those things which now fill us, and which we make such a noise about, shall shortly *vanish*, and be *no more*; the very things we are striving about are passing away: *The hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.* *First*, The object of worship is supposed to continue still the same—*God*, as a Father; under this notion the very heathen worshipped God, the Jews did so, and probably the Samaritans. *Secondly*, But a period shall be put to all niceness and all differences

about the place of worship. The approaching dissolution of the Jewish economy, and the erecting of the evangelical state, shall set this matter at large, and lay all *in common*, so that it shall be a thing perfectly indifferent whether in either of these places or any other men worship God, for they shall not be tied to any place; neither *here nor there*, but *both*, and *any where*, and *every where*. Note, The worship of God is not now, under the gospel, appropriated to any place, as it was under the law, but it is God's will that men pray every where. 1 Tim. ii. 8; Mal. i. 11. Our reason teaches us to consult *decency* and *convenience* in the places of our worship: but our religion gives no preference to one place above another, in respect to holiness and acceptableness to God. Those who prefer any worship merely for the sake of the house or building in which it is performed (though it were as magnificent and as solemnly consecrated as ever Solomon's temple was) forget that the *hour is come* when there shall be no difference put in God's account; no, not between Jerusalem, which *had been* so famous for sanctity, and the mountain of Samaria, which *had been* so infamous for impiety.

[2.] He lays a stress upon other things, in the matter of religious worship. When he made so light of the place of worship he did not intend to lessen our concern about the thing itself, of which therefore he takes occasion to discourse more fully.

*First*, As to the present state of the controversy, he determines against the Samaritan worship, and in favour of the Jews, v. 22 He tells her here, 1. That the Samaritans were certainly *in the wrong*; not merely because they worshipped in this mountain, though, while Jerusalem's choice was in force, that was sinful, but because they were out in the object of their worship. If the worship itself had been as it should have been, its separation from Jerusalem might have been connived at, as the *high places* were in the best reigns: *But you worship you know not what, or that which you do not know*. They worshipped the God of Israel, the true God (Ezra iv. 2; 2 Kings xvii. 32); but they were sunk into gross ignorance; they worshipped him as the *God of that land* (2 Kings xvii. 27, 33), as a local deity, like the gods of the nations, whereas God must be served *as God*, as the universal cause and Lord. Note, Ignorance is so far from being the *mother* of devotion that it is the *murderer* of it. Those that worship God *ignorantly* offer the *blind* for sacrifice, and it is the *sacrifice of fools*.

2. That the Jews were certainly *in the right*. For, (1.) "*We know what we worship*. We go upon sure grounds in our worship, for our people are catechised and trained up in the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in the scripture." Note, Those who by the scriptures have obtained some knowledge of God (a certain though not a perfect knowledge) may worship him *comfortably* to



themselves, and acceptably to him, for they know what they worship. Christ elsewhere condemns the corruptions of the Jews' worship (Matt. xv. 9), and yet here defends the worship itself; the worship may be true where yet it is not pure and entire. Observe, Our Lord Jesus was pleased to reckon himself among the worshippers of God: *We worship. Though he was a Son* (and then are the children free), *yet learned he this obedience*, in the days of his humiliation. Let not the greatest of men think the worship of God below them, when the Son of God himself did not. (2.) *Salvation is of the Jews*; and therefore they know what they worship, and what grounds they go upon in their worship. Not that all the Jews were saved, nor that it was not possible but that many of the Gentiles and Samaritans might be saved, for in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him; but, [1.] The author of eternal salvation comes of the Jews, appears among them (Rom. ix. 5), and is sent first to bless them. [2.] The means of eternal salvation are afforded to them. The word of salvation (Acts xiii. 26) was of the Jews. It was delivered to them, and other nations derived it through them. This was a sure guide to them in their devotions, and they followed it, and therefore knew what they worshipped. To them were committed the oracles of God (Rom. iii. 2), and the service of God, Rom. ix. 4. The Jews therefore being thus privileged and advanced, it was presumption for the Samaritans to vie with them.

Secondly, He describes the evangelical worship which alone God would accept and be well pleased with. Having shown that the place is indifferent, he comes to show what is necessary and essential—that we worship God in spirit and in truth, v. 23, 24. The stress is not to be laid upon the place where we worship God, but upon the state of mind in which we worship him. Note, The most effectual way to take up differences in the minor matters of religion is to be more zealous in the greater. Those who daily make it the matter of their care to worship in the spirit, one would think, should not make it the matter of their strife whether he should be worshipped here or there. Christ had justly preferred the Jewish worship before the Samaritan, yet here he intimates the imperfection of that. The worship was ceremonial, Heb. ix. 1, 10. The worshippers were generally carnal, and strangers to the inward part of divine worship. Note, It is possible that we may be better than our neighbours, and yet not so good as we should be. It concerns us to be right, not only in the object of our worship, but in the manner of it; and it is this which Christ here instructs us in. Observe,

a. The great and glorious revolution which should introduce this change: *The hour cometh, and now is*—the fixed stated time,

concerning which it was of old determined when it should come, and how long it should last. The time of its appearance is fixed to an hour, so punctual and exact are the divine counsels; the time of its continuance is limited to an hour, so close and pressing is the opportunity of divine grace, 2 Cor. vi. 2. This hour cometh, it is coming in its full strength, lustre, and perfection, it now is in the embryo and infancy. The perfect day is coming, and now it dawns.

b. The blessed change itself. In gospel times the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. As creatures, we worship the Father of all: as Christians, we worship the Father of our Lord Jesus. Now the change shall be, (a.) In the nature of the worship. Christians shall worship God, not in the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic institution, but in spiritual ordinances, consisting less in bodily exercise, and animated and invigorated more with divine power and energy. The way of worship which Christ has instituted is rational and intellectual, and refined from those external rites and ceremonies with which the Old-Testament worship was both clouded and clogged. This is called true worship, in opposition to that which was typical. The legal services were figures of the true, Heb. ix. 3, 24. Those that revolted from Christianity to Judaism are said to begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh, Gal. iii. 3. Such was the difference between Old-Testament and New-Testament institutions. (b.) In the temper and disposition of the worshippers; and so the true worshippers are good Christians, distinguished from hypocrites; all should, and they will, worship God in spirit and in truth. It is spoken of (v. 23) as their character, and (v. 24) as their duty. Note, It is required of all that worship God that they worship him in spirit and in truth. We must worship God, [a.] In spirit, Phil. iii. 3. We must depend upon God's Spirit for strength and assistance, laying our souls under his influences and operations; we must devote our own spirits to, and employ them in, the service of God (Rom. i. 9), must worship him with fixedness of thought and a flame of affection, with all that is within us. Spirit is sometimes put for the new nature, in opposition to the flesh, which is the corrupt nature; and so to worship God with our spirits is to worship him with our graces, Heb. xii. 28. [b.] In truth, that is, in sincerity. God requires not only the inward part in our worship, but truth in the inward part, Ps. li. 6. We must mind the power more than the form, must aim at God's glory, and not to be seen of men; draw near with a true heart, Heb. x. 22.

Thirdly, He intimates the reasons why God must be thus worshipped.

a. Because in gospel times they, and they only, are accounted the true worshippers. The gospel erects a spiritual way of worship, so that the professors of the gospel are not

true in their profession, do not live up to gospel light and laws, if they do not worship God *in spirit and in truth*.

b. Because the Father seeketh such worshippers of him. This intimates, (a.) That such worshippers are very rare, and seldom met with, Jer. xxx. 21. The gate of spiritual worshipping is strait. (b.) That such worship is necessary, and what the God of heaven insists upon. When God comes to enquire for worshippers, the question will not be, "Who worshipped at Jerusalem?" but, "Who worshipped in spirit?" That will be the touchstone. (c.) That God is greatly well pleased with and graciously accepts such worship and such worshippers. *I have desired it*, Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14; Cant. ii. 14. (d.) That there has been, and will be to the end, a remnant of such worshippers; his seeking such worshippers implies his making them such. God is in all ages gathering in to himself a generation of spiritual worshippers.

c. Because God is a spirit. Christ came to declare God to us (ch. i. 18), and this he has declared concerning him; he declared it to this poor Samaritan woman, for the meanest are concerned to know God; and with this design, to rectify her mistakes concerning religious worship, to which nothing would contribute more than the right knowledge of God. Note, (a.) God is a spirit, for he is an infinite and eternal mind, an intelligent being, incorporeal, immaterial, invisible, and incorruptible. It is easier to say what God is not than what he is; a spirit has not flesh and bones, but who knows the way of a spirit? If God were not a spirit, he could not be perfect, nor infinite, nor eternal, nor independent, nor the Father of spirits. (b.) The spirituality of the divine nature is a very good reason for the spirituality of divine worship. If we do not worship God, who is a spirit, in the spirit, we neither give him the glory due to his name, and so do not perform the act of worship, nor can we hope to obtain his favour and acceptance, and so we miss of the end of worship, Matt. xv. 8, 9.

4. The last subject of discourse with this woman is concerning the Messiah, v. 25, 26. Observe here,

(1.) The faith of the woman, by which she expected the Messiah: *I know that Messiah cometh—and he will tell us all things*. She had nothing to object against what Christ had said; his discourse was, for aught she knew, what might become the Messiah then expected; but from him she would receive it, and in the mean time she thinks it best to suspend her belief. Thus many have no heart to the price in their hand (Prov. xvii. 16), because they think they have a better in their eye, and deceive themselves with a promise that they will learn that hereafter which they neglect now. Observe here,

[1.] Whom she expects: *I know that Messiah cometh*. The Jews and Samaritans, though so much at variance, agreed in the expecta-

tion of the Messiah and his kingdom. The Samaritans received the writings of Moses, and were no strangers to the prophets, nor to the hopes of the Jewish nation; those who knew least knew this, that Messiah was to come; so general and uncontested was the expectation of him, and at this time more raised than ever (for the sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel's weeks were near expiring), so that she concludes not only, *He will come*, but *ἐρχεται*—"He comes, he is just at hand:" *Messias, who is called Christ*. The evangelist, though he retains the Hebrew word *Messias* (which the woman used in honour to the holy language, and to the Jewish church, that used it familiarly), yet, writing for the use of the Gentiles, he takes care to render it by a Greek word of the same signification, *who is called Christ—Anointed*, giving an example to the apostle's rule, that whatever is spoken in an unknown or less vulgar tongue should be interpreted, 1 Cor. xiv. 27, 28.

[2.] What she expects from him. "He will tell us all things relating to the service of God which it is needful for us to know, will tell us that which will supply our defects, rectify our mistakes, and put an end to all our disputes. He will tell us the mind of God fully and clearly, and keep back nothing." Now this implies an acknowledgment, *First*, Of the deficiency and imperfection of the discovery they now had of the divine will, and the rule they had of the divine worship; it could not make the comers thereunto perfect, and therefore they expected some great advance and improvement in matters of religion, a time of reformation. *Secondly*, Of the sufficiency of the Messiah to make this change: "He will tell us all things which we want to know, and about which we wrangle in the dark. He will introduce peace, by leading us into all truth, and dispelling the mists of error." It seems, this was the comfort of good people in those dark times that light would arise; if they found themselves at a loss, and run aground, it was a satisfaction to them to say, *When Messiah comes, he will tell us all things*; as it may be to us now with reference to his second coming: now we see through a glass, but then face to face.

(2.) The favour of our Lord Jesus in making himself known to her: *I that speak to thee am he*, v. 26. Christ did never make himself known so expressly to any as he did here to this poor Samaritan, and to the blind man (ch. ix. 37); no, not to John Baptist, when he sent to him (Matt. xi. 4, 5); no, not to the Jews, when they challenged him to tell them whether he was the Christ, ch. x. 24. But, [1.] Christ would thus put an honour upon such as were poor and despised, Jam. ii. 6. [2.] This woman, for aught we know, had never had any opportunity of seeing Christ's miracles, which were then the ordinary method of conviction. Note, To those



who have not the advantage of the *external* means of knowledge and grace God hath *secret* ways of making up the want of them; we must therefore judge charitably concerning such. God can make the light of grace shine *into the heart* even where he doth not make the light of the gospel shine *in the face*.

[3.] This woman was better prepared to receive such a discovery than others were; she was big with expectation of the Messiah, and ready to receive instruction from him. Christ will manifest himself to those who with an honest humble heart desire to be acquainted with him: *I that speak to thee am he*. See here, *First*, How near Jesus Christ was to her, when she knew not who he was, Gen. xxviii. 16. Many are lamenting Christ's absence, and longing for his presence, when at the same time he is speaking to them. *Secondly*, How Christ makes himself known to us by *speaking* to us: *I that speak unto thee*, so closely, so convincingly, with such assurance, with such authority, *I am he*.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? 28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, 29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? 30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. 31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. 32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. 33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him *ought* to eat? 34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. 35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. 36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. 37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. 38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. 39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of

the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. 40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. 41 And many more believed, because of his own word; 42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

We have here the remainder of the story of what happened when Christ was in Samaria, after the long conference he had with the woman

I. *The interruption given to this discourse by the disciples' coming*. It is probable that much more was said than is recorded; but just when the discourse was brought to a head, when Christ had made himself known to her as the true Messiah, *then came the disciples*. The daughters of Jerusalem shall not stir up nor awake my love till he please. 1. They wondered at Christ's converse with this woman, marvelled that he talked thus earnestly (as perhaps they observed at a distance) with a woman, a strange woman alone (he used to be more reserved), especially with a Samaritan woman, that was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel; they thought their Master should be as shy of the Samaritans as the other Jews were, at least that he should not preach the gospel to them. They wondered he should condescend to talk with such a poor contemptible woman, forgetting what despicable men they themselves were when Christ first called them into fellowship with himself. 2. Yet they acquiesced in it; they knew it was for some good reason, and some good end, of which he was not bound to give them an account, and therefore none of them asked, *What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?* Thus, when particular difficulties occur in the word and providence of God, it is good to satisfy ourselves with this in general, that all is well which Jesus Christ saith and doeth. Perhaps there was something *amiss* in their *marvelling* that Christ talked with the woman: it was something like the Pharisees being offended at his eating with publicans and sinners. But, whatever they *thought*, they said *nothing*. If thou hast thought evil at any time, lay thy hand upon thy mouth, to keep that evil thought from turning into an evil word, Prov. xxx. 32; Ps. xxxix. 1—3.

II. The notice which the woman gave to her neighbours of the extraordinary person she had happily met with, v. 28, 29. Observe here,

1. How she forgot her errand to the well, v. 28. Therefore, because the disciples were come, and brought on the discourse, and per-

haps she observed they were not pleased with it, she *went her way*. She withdrew, in civility to Christ, that he might have leisure to *eat his dinner*. She delighted in his discourse, but would not be *rude*; every thing is beautiful in its season. She supposed that Jesus, when he had dined, would go forward in his journey, and therefore hastened to tell her neighbours, that they might come quickly. *Yet a little while is the light with you*. See how she improved time; when one good work was done, she applied herself to another. When opportunities of *getting good* cease, or are interrupted, we should seek opportunities of *doing good*; when we have done *hearing* the word, then is a time to be *speaking* of it. Notice is taken of her *leaving her water-pot or pail*. (1.) She left it in kindness to Christ, that he might have water to drink with his dinner, for fair water was his drink; he turned water into wine for others, but not for himself. Compare this with Rebecca's civility to Abraham's servant (Gen. xxiv. 18), and see that promise, Matt. x. 42. (2.) She left it that she might make the more haste into the city, to carry thither these good tidings. Those whose business it is to publish the name of Christ must not encumber or entangle themselves with any thing that will retard or hinder them therein. When the disciples are to be made fishers of men they must *forsake all*. (3.) She left her water-pot, as one *careless of it*, being wholly taken up with better things. Note, Those who are brought to the knowledge of Christ will show it by a holy contempt of this world and the things of it. And those who are *newly acquainted* with the things of God must be *excused*, if at first they be so taken up with the new world into which they are brought that the things of this world seem to be for a time wholly neglected. Mr. Hildersham, in one of his sermons on this verse, from this instance largely justifies those who leave their worldly business on week-days to go to hear sermons.

2. How she *mindeth her errand to the town*, for her heart was upon it. She *went into the city*, and said to *the men*, probably the aldermen, the men in authority, whom, it may be, she found met together upon some public business; or to *the men*, that is, to every man she met in the streets; she proclaimed it in the chief places of concourse: *Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did*. Is not this the Christ? Observe,

(1.) How *solicitous* she was to *have her friends and neighbours acquainted* with Christ. When she had found that treasure, she *called together her friends and neighbours* (as Luke xv. 9), not only to *rejoice with her*, but to share with her, knowing there was enough to enrich herself and all that would partake with her. Note They that have been themselves with Jesus, and have found comfort in him, should do all they can to bring others to him. Has he done us the honour to make

himself known to us? Let us do him the honour to make him known to others; nor can we do ourselves a greater honour. This woman becomes an apostle. *Quæ scortum fuerat egressa, regreditur magistra evangelica*—*She who went forth a specimen of impurity returns a teacher of evangelical truth*, saith Aretius. Christ had told her to *call her husband*, which she thought was warrant enough to *call every body*. She went into the city, the city where she dwelt, among her kinsfolks and acquaintance. Though every man is my neighbour that I have opportunity of doing good to, yet I have most *opportunity*, and therefore lie under the greatest *obligations*, to do good to those that live near me. *Where the tree falls*, there let it be made useful.

(2.) How fair and ingenuous she was in the notice she gave them concerning this stranger she had met with. [1.] She *tells them* plainly what induced her to admire him: *He has told me all things that ever I did*. No more is recorded than what he told her of her husbands; but it is not improbable that he had told her of more of her faults. Or, his telling her that which she knew he could not by any ordinary means come to the knowledge of convinced her that he could have told her all that she ever did. If he has a *divine* knowledge, it must be omniscience. He told her that which none knew but God and her own conscience. Two things affected her:—*First, the extent of his knowledge*. We ourselves cannot tell *all things that ever we did* (many things pass *unheeded*, and more pass away and are forgotten); but Jesus Christ knows all the thoughts, words, and actions, of all the children of men; see Heb. iv. 13. He hath said, *I know thy works*. *Secondly, The power of his word*. This made a great impression upon her, that he told her her *secret sins* with such an unaccountable power and energy that, being told of one, she is *convinced of all, and judged of all*. She does not say, "Come, see a man that has told me strange things concerning religious worship, and the laws of it, that has decided the controversy between this mountain and Jerusalem, a man that calls himself the *Messias*;" but, "Come see a man that has told me of my sins." She fastens upon that part of Christ's discourse which one would think she would have been most shy of repeating; but experimental proofs of the power of Christ's word and Spirit are of all others the most cogent and convincing; and that *knowledge of Christ* into which we are led by the conviction of sin and humiliation is most likely to be *sound and saving*. [2.] She *invites them to come and see him* of whom she had conceived so high an opinion. Not barely, "Come and look upon him" (she does not invite them to him as a *show*), but, "Come and converse with him; come and *hear his wisdom*, as I have done, and you will be of my mind. She would not undertake to



manage the arguments which had convinced her, in such a manner as to convince others; all that see the evidence of truth themselves are not able to make others see it; but, "Come, and talk with him, and you will find such a power in his word as far exceeds all other evidence." Note, Those who can do little else towards the conviction and conversion of others may and should bring them to those means of grace which they themselves have found effectual. Jesus was now at the town's end. "Now come see him." When opportunities of getting the knowledge of God are brought to our doors we are inexcusable if we neglect them; shall we not go over the threshold to see him whose day prophets and kings desired to see? [3.] She resolves to *appeal to themselves*, and their own sentiments upon the trial? *Is not this the Christ?* She does not peremptorily say, "He is the Messiah," how clear soever she was in her own mind, and yet she very prudently mentions the Messiah, of whom otherwise they would not have thought, and then refers it to themselves; she will not impose her faith upon them, but only propose it to them. By such fair but forcible appeals as these men's judgments and consciences are sometimes taken hold of ere they are aware.

(3.) What success she had in this invitation: *They went out of the city, and came to him, v. 30.* Though it might seem very improbable that a woman of so *small* a figure, and so *ill* a character, should have the honour of the first discovery of the Messiah among the Samaritans, yet it pleased God to incline their hearts to take notice of her report, and not to slight it as an idle tale. Time was when lepers were the first that brought tidings to Samaria of a great deliverance, 2 Kings vii. 3, &c. *They came unto him*; did not send for him into the city to them, but in token of their respect to him, and the earnestness of their desire to see him, they *went out to him*. Those that would know Christ must meet him where he records his name.

III. Christ's discourse with his disciples while the woman was absent, v. 31—38. See how industrious our Lord Jesus was to *redeem time*, to husband every minute of it, and to *fill up* the vacancies of it. When the disciples were gone into the town, his discourse with the woman was *edifying*, and suited to her case; when she was gone into the town, his discourse with them was no less edifying, and suited to their case; it were well if we could *thus* gather up the fragments of time, that none of it may be lost. Two things are observable in this discourse:—

1. How Christ expresses the delight which he himself had in his work. His work was to *seek and save* that which was lost, to go about doing good. Now with this work we here find him wholly taken up. For,

(1.) *He neglected his meat and drink for his*  
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*work.* When he sat down upon the well, he was *weary*, and needed refreshment; but this opportunity of saving souls made him forget his weariness and hunger. And he minded *his food* so little that, [1.] His disciples were forced to invite him to it: *They prayed him*, they pressed him, saying, *Master, eat.* It was an instance of their *love to him* that they invited him, lest he should be faint and sick for want of some support; but it was a greater instance of his *love to souls* that he needed invitation. Let us learn hence a holy indifference even to the needful supports of life, in comparison with spiritual things. [2.] He minded it so little that they suspected he had had meat brought him in their absence (v. 33): *Has any man brought him ought to eat?* He had so little appetite for his dinner that they were ready to think he had dined already. Those that make religion their business will, when any of its affairs are to be attended, prefer them before their food; as Abraham's servant, that would not eat till he had told his errand (Gen. xxiv. 33), and Samuel, that would not sit down till David was anointed, 1 Sam. xvi. 11.

(2.) *He made his work his meat and drink.* The work he *had done* in instructing the woman, the work he *had to do* among the Samaritans, the prospect he now had of doing good to many, this was *meat and drink* to him; it was the greatest pleasure and satisfaction imaginable. Never did a hungry man, or an epicure, expect a plentiful feast with so much desire, nor feed upon its dainties with so much delight, as our Lord Jesus expected and improved an opportunity of doing good to souls. Concerning this he saith, [1.] That it was such *meat* as the disciples *knew not of*. They did not imagine that he had any design or prospect of planting his gospel among the Samaritans; this was a piece of usefulness they never thought of. Note, Christ by his gospel and Spirit does more good to the souls of men than his own disciples *know of or expect*. This may be said of good Christians too, who live by faith, that they have meat to eat which others know not of, joy with which a stranger does not intermeddle. Now this word made them ask, *Has any man brought him ought to eat?* so apt were even his own disciples to understand him after a corporal and carnal manner when he used similitudes. [2.] That the reason why his work was his meat and drink was because it was his Father's work, his Father's will: *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, v. 34.* Note, *First*, The salvation of sinners is the *will of God*, and the instruction of them in order thereunto is *his work*. See 1 Tim. ii. 4. There is a chosen remnant whose salvation is in a particular manner his will. *Secondly*, Christ was *sent into the world* on this errand, to bring people to God, to know him and to be happy in him. *Thirdly*, He made this work his business and delight. When his body

needed food, his mind was so taken up with this that he forgot both hunger and thirst, both meat and drink. Nothing could be more grateful to him than doing good; when he was invited to *meat* he went, that he might *do good*, for that was his *meat* always. *Fourthly*, He was not only ready upon all occasions to go to his work, but he was *earnest* and in care to go *through* it, and to *finish* his work in all the parts of it. He resolved never to quit it, nor lay it down, till he could say, *It is finished*. Many have zeal to carry them out at first, but not zeal to carry them on to the last; but our Lord Jesus was intent upon *finishing* his work. Our Master has herein left us an example, that we may learn to do the will of God as he did; 1. With diligence and close application, as those that make a business of it. 2. With delight and pleasure in it, as in our element. 3. With constancy and perseverance; not only minding to *do*, but aiming to *finish*, our work.

2. See here how Christ, having expressed his delight in *his* work, excites his disciples to diligence in *their* work; they were workers *with him*, and therefore should be workers *like him*, and make their work their *meat*, as he did. The work they had to do was to *preach the gospel*, and to set up the kingdom of the Messiah. Now this work he here compares to *harvest work*, the gathering in of the fruits of the earth; and this similitude he prosecutes throughout the discourse, v. 35—

Note, gospel time is harvest time, and gospel work harvest work. The harvest is before *appointed* and expected; so was the gospel. Harvest time is *busy* time; all hands must be then at work: every one must work *for himself*, that he may reap of the graces and comforts of the gospel: ministers must work *for God*, to gather in souls to him. Harvest time is *opportunity*, a short and limited time, which will not last always; and harvest work is work that must be done *then* or not at all; so the time of the enjoyment of the gospel is a particular season, which must be improved for its proper purposes; for, once past, it cannot be recalled. The disciples were to gather in a harvest of souls for Christ. Now he here suggests three things to them to quicken them to diligence:—

(1.) That it was *necessary work*, and the *occasion* for it very urgent and pressing (v. 35): *You say, It is four months to harvest*; but I say, *The fields are already white*. Here is,

[1.] A saying of Christ's disciples concerning the *corn-harvest*; *there are yet four months, and then comes harvest*, which may be taken either *generally*—"You say, for the encouragement of the sower at seed-time, that it will be but four months to the harvest." With us it is but about four months between the barley-sowing and the barley-harvest, probably it was so with them as to other grain; or, "Particularly, now at this time you reckon it will be four months to

next harvest, according to the ordinary course of providence." The Jews' harvest began at the Passover, about Easter, much earlier in the year than ours, by which it appears that this journey of Christ from Judea to Galilee was in the winter, about the end of November, for he travelled *all weathers* to do good. God has not only promised us a harvest every year, but has appointed the *weeks of harvest*; so that we know *when* to expect it, and take our measures accordingly.

[2.] A saying of Christ's concerning the *gospel harvest*: his heart was as much upon the fruits of his gospel as the hearts of others were upon the fruits of the earth; and to this he would lead the thoughts of his disciples. *Look, the fields are already white unto the harvest*. *First*, Here in *this* place, where they *now* were, there was harvest work for *him* to do. They would have him to *eat*, v. 31. "Eat!" saith he, "I have other work to do, that is more needful; look what crowds of Samaritans are coming out of the town over the fields that are ready to receive the gospel;" probably there were many now in view. People's forwardness to hear the word is a great excitement to ministers' diligence and liveliness in preaching it. *Secondly*, In *other places*, all the country over, there was harvest work enough for them all to do. "Consider the *regions*, think of the state of the country, and you will find there are multitudes as ready to receive the gospel as a field of corn that is fully ripe is ready to be reaped." The fields were now made *white to the harvest*, 1. By the *decree of God* revealed in the prophecies of the Old Testament. Now was the time when the gathering of the people should be to Christ (Gen. xlix. 10), when great accessions should be made to the church and the bounds of it should be enlarged, and therefore it was time for them to be busy. It is a great encouragement to us to engage in any work for God, if we understand by the signs of the times that this is the proper season for that work, for then it will prosper. 2. By the *disposition of men*. John Baptist had made *ready a people prepared for the Lord*, Luke i. 17. Since he began to preach the kingdom of God *every man pressed into it*, Luke xvi. 16. This, therefore, was a time for the preachers of the gospel to apply themselves to their work with the utmost vigour, to *thrust in their sickle*, when the harvest was ripe, Rev. xiv. 15. It was *necessary* to work now, pity that such a season should be let slip. If the corn that is *ripe* be not reaped, it will *shed* and be lost, and the fowls will pick it up. If souls that are under convictions, and have some good inclinations, be not helped now, their hopeful beginnings will come to nothing, and they will be a prey to pretenders. It was also *easy* to work now; when the people's hearts are *prepared* the work will be done *suddenly*, 2 Chron. xxix. 36. It cannot but quicken ministers to take



pains in preaching the word when they observe that people *take pleasure* in hearing it.

(2.) That it was *profitable and advantageous* work, which they themselves would be gainers by (v. 36): "*He that reapeth receiveth wages, and so shall you.*" Christ has undertaken to pay those well whom he employs in his work; for he will never do as Jehoiakim did, *who used his neighbour's service without wages* (Jer. xxii. 13), or those who *by fraud kept back the hire of those particularly who reaped their corn-fields*, Jam. v. 4. Christ's reapers, though they cry to him day and night, shall never have cause to cry *against him*, nor to say they served a hard Master. He that reapeth, not only *shall* but *does* receive wages. There is a present reward in the service of Christ, and his work is *its own wages*. [1.] Christ's reapers have *fruit*: *He gathereth fruit unto life eternal*; that is, he shall both save himself and those that hear him, 1 Tim. iv. 16. If the faithful reaper save his own soul, that is fruit abounding to his account, it is fruit gathered to *life eternal*; and if, over and above this, he be instrumental to save the souls of others too, there is *fruit gathered*. Souls gathered to Christ are fruit, good fruit, the fruit that Christ seeks for (Rom. i. 13); it is gathered for Christ

Cant. viii. 11, 12); it is gathered to *life eternal*. This is the comfort of faithful ministers, that their work has a tendency to the eternal salvation of precious souls. [2.] They have *joy*: *That he that sows and they that reap may rejoice together*. The minister who is the happy instrument of beginning a good work is *he that sows*, as John Baptist; he that is employed to carry it on and perfect it is *he that reaps*: and both shall rejoice together. Note, *First*, Though God is to have all the glory of the success of the gospel, yet faithful ministers may themselves take the comfort of it. The reapers share in the *joy of harvest*, though the profits belong to the master, 1 Thess. ii. 19. *Secondly*, Those ministers who are variously gifted and employed should be so far from envying one another that they should rather mutually rejoice in each other's success and usefulness. Though all Christ's ministers are not alike *serviceable*, nor alike *successful*, yet, if they have obtained mercy of the Lord to be *faithful*, they shall all enter *together into the joy of their Lord* at last.

(3.) That it was *easy work*, and work that was half done to their hands by those that were gone before them: *One soweth, and another reapeth*, v. 37, 38. This sometimes denotes a grievous judgment upon him that sows, Mic. vi. 15; Deut. xxviii. 30, *Thou shalt sow, and another shall reap*; as Deut. vi. 11, *Houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not*. So here, Moses, and the prophets, and John Baptist, had *paved the way* to the gospel, had sown the good seed which the New-Testament ministers did in effect but gather the fruit of. *I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed, in comparison, no*

*labour*. Isa. xl. 3—5. [1.] This intimates *two things* concerning the Old-Testament ministry:—*First*, That it was very much *short* of the New-Testament ministry. Moses and the prophets sowed, but they could not be said to *reap*, so little did they see of the fruit of their labours. Their writings have done much more good since they left us than ever their preaching did. *Secondly*, That it was very *serviceable* to the New-Testament ministry, and made way for it. The writings of the prophets, which were read in the synagogues every sabbath day, raised people's expectations of the Messiah, and so prepared them to bid him welcome. Had it not been for the seed sown by the prophets, this Samaritan woman could not have said, *We know that Messiah cometh*. The writings of the Old Testament are in some respects more useful to us than they could be to those to whom they were first written, because better understood by the accomplishment of them. See 1 Pet. i. 12; Heb. iv. 2; Rom. xvi. 25, 26. [2.] This also intimates *two things* concerning the ministry of the *apostles of Christ*.

*First*, That it was a *fruitful* ministry: they were reapers that gathered in a great harvest of souls to Jesus Christ, and did more in seven years towards the setting up of the kingdom of God among men than the prophets of the Old Testament had done in twice so many ages. *Secondly*, That it was much *facilitated*, especially among the Jews, to whom they were first sent, by the writings of the prophets. The prophets *sowed in tears*, crying out, *We have laboured in vain*; the apostles *reaped in joy*, saying, *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph*. Note, From the labours of ministers that are dead and gone much good fruit may be reaped by the people that *survive* them and the ministers that *succeed* them. John Baptist, and those that assisted him, had *laboured*, and the disciples of Christ entered into their labours, built upon their foundation, and reaped the fruit of what they sowed. See what reason we have to bless God for those that are *gone before us*, for their preaching and their writing, for what they *did* and *suffered* in their day, for we are *entered into their labours*; their studies and services have made our work the easier. And when the ancient and modern labourers, those that came into the vineyard at the third hour and those that came in at the eleventh, meet in the day of account, they will be so far from envying one another the honour of their respective services that both *they that sowed* and *they that reaped* shall rejoice together; and the great Lord of the harvest shall have the glory of all.

IV. The *good effect* which this visit Christ made to the Samaritans (*en passant*) had upon them, and the fruit which was now presently gathered among them, v. 39—42. See what impressions were made on them,

1. By the *woman's testimony* concerning



*Christ*; though a single testimony, and of one of no good report, and the testimony no more than this, *He told me all that ever I did*, yet it had a good influence upon many. One would have thought that his telling the woman of her secret sins would have made them afraid of coming to him, lest he should tell them also of their faults; but they will venture that rather than not be acquainted with one who they had reason to think was a prophet. And *two things* they were brought to:—

(1.) *To credit Christ's word* (v. 39): *Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman*. So far they believed on him that they took him for a prophet, and were desirous to know the mind of God from him; this is favourably interpreted a believing on him. Now observe, [1.] Who they were that believed: *Many of the Samaritans*, who were not of the house of Israel. Their faith was not only an *aggravation* of the *unbelief* of the Jews, from whom better might have been expected, but an *earnest* of the *faith* of the Gentiles, who would welcome that which the Jews rejected. [2.] Upon what inducement they believed: *For the saying of the woman*. See here, *First*, How God is sometimes pleased to use very weak and unlikely instruments for the beginning and carrying on of a good work. A little maid directed a great prince to Elisha, 2 Kings v. 2. *Secondly*, How great a matter a little fire kindles. Our Saviour, by instructing one poor woman, spread instruction to a whole town. Let not ministers be either *careless* in their preaching, or *discouraged* in it, because their hearers are *few and mean*; for, by doing good to *them*, good may be conveyed to *more*, and those that are more considerable. If they *teach every man his neighbour*, and *every man his brother*, a great number may learn at *second hand*. Philip preached the gospel to a single gentleman in his chariot upon the road, and he not only received it himself, but carried it into his country, and propagated it there. *Thirdly*, See how good it is to speak *experimentally* of Christ and the things of God. This woman could say little of Christ, but what she did say she spoke feelingly: *He told me all that ever I did*. Those are most likely to do good that can tell what God has done *for their souls*, Ps. lvi. 16.

(2.) They were brought to *court his stay* among them (v. 40): When they were come to him *they besought him that he would tarry with them*. Upon the woman's report, they believed him to be a prophet, and *came to him*; and, when they *saw him*, the meanness of his appearance and the manifest poverty of his outward condition did not lessen their esteem of him and expectations from him, but still they respected him as a prophet. Note, There is hope of those who are got over the vulgar prejudices that men have against *true worth* in a *low estate*. Blessed are they that are not offended in Christ at the *first sight*.

So far were they from being offended in him that they begged he would tarry with them; [1.] That they might *testify their respect* to him, and treat him with the honour and kindness due to his character. God's prophets and ministers are welcome guests to all those who sincerely embrace the gospel; as to Lydia, Acts xvi. 15. [2.] That they might receive instruction from him. Those that are taught of God are truly desirous to learn more, and to be better acquainted with Christ. Many would have flocked to one that would tell them *their fortune*, but these flocked to one that would tell them *their faults*, tell them of their sin and duty. The historian seems to lay an emphasis upon their being Samaritans; as Luke x. 33; xvii. 16. The Samaritans had not that reputation for religion which the Jews had; yet the Jews, who saw Christ's miracles, drove him from them while the Samaritans, who saw not his miracles, nor shared in his favours, invited him to them. The *proof* of the gospel's success is not always according to the *probability*, nor what is *experienced* according to what is *expected* either way. The Samaritans were taught by the custom of their country to be shy of conversation with the Jews. There were Samaritans that refused to let Christ go through their town (Luke ix. 53), but these begged him to tarry with them. Note, It adds much to the praise of our love to Christ and his word if it conquers the prejudices of education and custom, and sets light by the censures of men. Now we are told that Christ granted their request.

*First*, He *abode there*. Though it was a city of the Samaritans nearly adjoining to their temple, yet, when he was *invited*, he *tarried* there; though he was upon a journey, and had further to go, yet, when he had an opportunity of doing good, he *abode there*. That is no real *hindrance* which will *further* our account. Yet he abode there but *two days*, because he had other places to visit and other work to do, and those *two days* were as many as came to the share of this city, out of the few days of our Saviour's sojourning upon earth.

*Secondly*, We are told what impressions were made upon them by Christ's own word, and his personal converse with them (v. 41, 42); what he *said* and *did* there is not related, whether he healed their sick or no; but it is intimated, in the effect, that he said and did that which convinced them that he was the Christ; and the labours of a minister are best told by the good fruit of them. Their hearing of him had a good effect, but *now their eyes saw him*; and the effect was, 1. That their number grew (v. 41): *Many more believed*: many that would not be persuaded to go out of the town to him were yet wrought upon, when he came among them, to believe in him. Note, It is comfortable to see the number of believers; and sometimes the zeal and forwardness of some may be a means to



provoke many, and to stir them up to a holy emulation, Rom. xi. 14. 2. That their faith grew. Those who had been wrought upon by the report of the woman now saw cause to say, *Now we believe, not because of thy saying*, v. 42. Here are three things in which their *faith grew*:—(1.) In the matter of it, or that which they did believe. Upon the testimony of the woman, they believed him to be *a prophet*, or some extraordinary messenger from heaven; but now that they have conversed with him they believe that he is *the Christ*, the *Anointed One*, the very same that was promised to the fathers and expected by them, and that, being the *Christ*, he is the *Saviour of the world*; for the work to which he was anointed was to *save his people from their sins*. They believed him to be the Saviour not only of the Jews, but of the world, which they hoped would take them in, though Samaritans, for it was promised that he should be *Salvation to the ends of the earth*, Isa. xlix. 6. (2.) In the *certainty* of it; their faith now grew up to a full assurance: *We know* that this is indeed the *Christ*; ἀληθῶς—*truly*; not a pretended Christ, but a real one; not a *typical* Saviour, as many under the Old Testament, but *truly* one. Such an assurance as this of divine truths is what we should labour after; not only, We think it probable, and are willing to suppose that *Jesus* may be the *Christ*, but, We know that he is *indeed the Christ*. (3.) In the *ground* of it, which was a kind of spiritual sensation and experience: *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves*. They had before *believed for her saying*, and it was well, it was a good step; but now they find *further* and much *firmer* footing for their faith: "*Now we believe* because we have *heard him ourselves*, and have heard such excellent and divine truths, accompanied with such commanding power and evidence, that we are abundantly satisfied and assured that *this is the Christ*." This is like what the queen of Sheba said of Solomon (1 Kings x. 6, 7): *The one half was not told me*. The Samaritans, who believed for the woman's saying, now gained further light; for *to him that hath shall be given*; he that is faithful in a little shall be trusted with more. In this instance we may see how *faith comes by hearing*. [1.] Faith comes to the birth by hearing the report of men. These Samaritans, for the sake of the woman's saying, believed so far as to come and see, to come and make trial. Thus the instructions of parents and preachers, and the testimony of the church and our experienced neighbours, recommend the doctrine of Christ to our acquaintance, and incline us to entertain it as highly probable. But, [2.] Faith comes to its growth, strength, and maturity, by hearing the testimony of Christ himself; and this goes further, and recommends his doctrine to our acceptance, and obliges us to believe it as undoubtedly certain. We were inclined to look into the scriptures

by the saying of those who told us that in them they had found eternal life; but when we ourselves have found it in them too, have experienced the enlightening, convincing, regenerating, sanctifying, comforting, power of the word, now we believe, *not for their saying*, but because we have searched them ourselves: and our faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5; 1 John v. 9, 10.

Thus was the seed of the gospel sown in Samaria. What effect there was of this afterwards does not appear, but we find that four or five years after, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, he found such blessed remains of this good work now wrought that the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spoke, Acts viii. 5, 6, 8. But as some were pliable to good so were others to evil, whom Simon Magus bewitched with his sorceries, v. 9, 10.

43 Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee. 44 For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. 45 Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast. 46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. 48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. 49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. 50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. 51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. 52 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. 53 So the father knew that *it was* at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and

his whole house. 54 This is again the second miracle *that* Jesus did, when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee.

In these verses we have,

I. Christ's coming into Galilee, v. 43. Though he was as welcome among the Samaritans as he could be any where, and had better success, yet *after two days* he left them, not so much because they were Samaritans, and he would not confirm those in their prejudices against him who said, *He is a Samaritan* (ch. viii. 48), but because *he must preach to other cities*, Luke iv. 43. *He went into Galilee*, for there he spent much of his time. Now see here,

1. Whither Christ went: into Galilee, into the country of Galilee, but not to Nazareth, which was strictly *his own country*. He went among the villages, but declined going to Nazareth, the head city, for a reason here given, which *Jesus himself testified*, who knew the temper of his countrymen, the hearts of all men, and the experiences of all prophets, and it is this, *That a prophet has no honour in his own country*. Note, (1.) Prophets ought to have honour, because God has put honour upon them, and we do or may receive benefit by them. (2.) The honour due to the Lord's prophets has very often been denied them, and contempt put upon them. (3.) This *due* honour is most frequently denied them *in their own country*; see Luke iv. 24; Matt. xiii. 57. Not that it is universally true (no rule but has some exceptions), but it holds for the most part. Joseph, when he began to be a prophet, was most hated by his brethren; David was disdained by his brother (1 Sam. xvii. 28); Jeremiah was maligned by the men of Anathoth (Jer. xi. 21), Paul by his countrymen the Jews; and Christ's near kinsmen spoke most slightly of him, ch. vii. 5. Men's pride and envy make them scorn to be instructed by those who once were their school-fellows and play-fellows. Desire of novelty, and of that which is far-fetched and dear-bought, and seems to drop out of the sky to them, makes them despise those persons and things which they have been long used to and know the rise of. (4.) It is a great discouragement to a minister to go among a people who have no value for him or his labours. Christ would not go to Nazareth, because he knew how little respect he should have there. (5.) It is just with God to deny his gospel to those that despise the ministers of it. They that mock the messengers forfeit the benefit of the message. Matt. xxi. 35, 41.

2. What entertainment he met with among the Galileans in the country (v. 45): They *received him*, bade him welcome, and cheerfully attended on his doctrine. Christ and his gospel are not sent in vain; if they have not honour with *some*, they shall have with *others*. Now the reason given why these

Galileans were so ready to receive Christ is because they had seen *the miracles he did at Jerusalem*, v. 45. Observe, (1.) They went up to Jerusalem at the feast, the feast of the passover. The Galileans lay very remote from Jerusalem, and their way thither lay through the country of the Samaritans, which was troublesome for a Jew to pass through, worse than Baca's valley of old; yet, in obedience to God's command, they *went up to the feast*, and there they became acquainted with Christ. Note, They that are diligent and constant in attending on public ordinances some time or other meet with more spiritual benefit than they expect. (2.) At Jerusalem they *saw* Christ's miracles, which recommended him and his doctrine very much to their faith and affections. The miracles were wrought for the benefit of those at Jerusalem; yet the Galileans who were accidentally there got more advantage by them than they did for whom they were chiefly designed. Thus the word preached to a *mixed multitude* may perhaps edify *occasional* hearers more than the constant auditory.

3. What city he went to. When he would go to a city, he chose to go to Cana of Galilee, *where he had made the water wine* (v. 46); thither he went, to see if there were any good fruits of that miracle remaining; and, if there were, to confirm their faith, and water what he had planted. The evangelist mentions this miracle here to teach us to keep in remembrance what we *have seen* of the works of Christ.

II. His *curing the nobleman's son* that was sick of a fever. This story is not recorded by any other of the evangelists; it comes in Matt. iv. 23.

Observe, 1. Who the *petitioner* was, and who the *patient*: the petitioner was a *nobleman*; the patient was his son: *There was a certain nobleman*. *Regulus* (so the Latin), a *little king*; so called, either for the largeness of his estate, or the extent of his power, or the royalties that belonged to his manor. Some understand it as denoting his *preference*—he was a courtier in some office about the king; others as denoting his *party*—he was an Herodian, a royalist, a prerogative-man, one that espoused the interests of the Herods, father and son; perhaps it was Chuza, Herod's steward (Luke viii. 3), or Manaen, Herod's foster-brother, Acts xiii. 1. There were saints in Cæsar's household. The father a nobleman, and yet the son sick; for dignities and titles of honour will be no security to persons and families from the assaults of sickness and death. It was fifteen miles from Capernaum where this nobleman lived to Cana, where Christ now was; yet this affliction in his family sent him so far to Christ.

2. How the petitioner made his *application* to the physician. Having heard that *Jesus was come out of Judea to Galilee*, and finding that he did not come towards Capernaum,



but turned off towards the other side of the country, he *went to him* himself, and *besought him to come and heal his son*, v. 47. See here, (1.) His *tender affection* to his son, that when he was sick he would spare no pains to get help for him. (2.) His *great respect* to our Lord Jesus, that he would come himself to wait upon him, when he might have sent a servant; and that he *besought him*, when, as a man in authority, some would think he might have ordered his attendance. The greatest men, when they come to God, must become beggars, and sue *sub forma pauperis*—as paupers. As to the errand he came upon, we may observe a mixture in *his faith*.

[1.] There was *sincerity* in it; he did believe that Christ could heal his son, though his disease was dangerous. It is probable he had physicians to him, who had given him over; but he believed that Christ could cure him when the case seemed deplorable. [2.] Yet there was *infirmity* in his faith; he believed that Christ could heal his son, but, as it should seem, he thought he could not heal him at a distance, and therefore he besought him that he would *come down* and heal him, expecting, as Naaman did, that he would come and *strike his hand* over the patient, as if he could not cure him but by a *physical contact*. Thus we are apt to *limit the Holy One of Israel*, and to stint him to our forms. The centurion, a Gentile, a soldier, was so strong in faith as to say, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof*, Matt. viii. 8. This nobleman, a Jew, must have Christ to come down, though it was a good day's journey, and despairs of a cure unless he come down, as if he must teach Christ how to work. We are encouraged to *pray*, but we are not allowed to prescribe: *Lord, heal me*; but, whether with a word or a touch, *thy will be done*.

3. The gentle rebuke he met with in this address (v. 48): *Jesus said to him*, "I see how it is; *except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe*, as the Samaritans did, though they saw no signs and wonders, and therefore I must work miracles among you." Though he was a *nobleman*, and now in *grief* about his son, and had shown great respect to Christ in coming so far to him, yet Christ gives him a reproof. Men's dignity in the world shall not exempt them from the rebukes of the word or providence; for Christ reproves not *after the hearing of his ears*, but *with equity*, Isa. xi. 3, 4. Observe, Christ first shows him his sin and weakness, to prepare him for mercy, and then grants his request. Those whom Christ intends to honour with his *favours* he first *humbles* with his *frowns*. The Comforter shall first *convince*. Herod longed to see some miracle (Luke xxiii. 8), and this courtier was of the same mind, and the generality of the people too. Now that which is blamed is, (1.) That, whereas they had heard by credible and incontestable report of the miracles he had

wrought in other places, they would not believe except they saw them with their own eyes, Luke iv. 23. They must be *honoured*, and they must be *humoured*, or they will not be *convinced*. Their country must be graced, and their curiosity gratified, with signs and wonders, or else, though the doctrine of Christ be sufficiently proved by miracles wrought elsewhere, they *will not believe*. Like Thomas, they will yield to no method of conviction but what they shall prescribe. (2.) That, whereas they had seen divers miracles, the evidence of which they could not gainsay, but which sufficiently proved Christ to be a teacher come from God, and should now have applied themselves to him for instruction in his doctrine, which by its native excellency would have *gently led them on*, in believing, to a spiritual perfection, instead of this they would go no further in believing than they were *driven* by signs and wonders. The *spiritual* power of the word did not *affect them*, did not *attract* them, but only the *sensible* power of miracles, which were *for those who believe not*, while *prophesying* was for *those that believe*, 1 Cor. xiv. 22. Those that admire *miracles* only, and *despise prophesying*, rank themselves with unbelievers.

4. His continued importunity in his address (v. 49): *Sir, come down ere my child die*. *Képe*—*Lord*; so it should be rendered. In this reply of his we have, (1.) Something that was commendable: he took the reproof patiently; he spoke to Christ respectfully. Though he was one of those that wore soft clothing, yet he could bear reproof. It is none of the privileges of peerage to be above the reproofs of the word of Christ; but it is a sign of a good temper and disposition in men, especially in great men, when they can be told of their faults and not be angry. And, as he did not take the reproof for an affront, so he did not take it for a denial, but still prosecuted his request, and continued to wrestle till he prevailed. Nay, he might argue thus: "If Christ heal *my soul*, surely he will heal *my son*; if he cure *my* unbelief, he will cure *his* fever." This is the method Christ takes, first to work *upon us*, and then to work *for us*; and there is hope if we find him entering upon this method. (2.) Something that was blameworthy, that was his *infirmity*; for, [1.] He seems to take no notice of the reproof Christ gave him, says nothing to it, by way either of confession or of excuse, for he is so wholly taken up with concern about his child that he can mind nothing else. Note, The sorrow of the world is a great prejudice to our profiting by the word of Christ. Inordinate care and grief are thorns that choke the good seed; see Exod. vi. 9. [2.] He still discovered the weakness of his *faith* in the power of Christ. *First*, He must have Christ to come down, thinking that else he could do the child no kindness. It is hard to persuade ourselves that



distance of time and place are no obstructions to the knowledge and power of our Lord Jesus; yet so it is: he sees afar off, for his eyes run to and fro; and he acts afar off, for his word, the word of his power, runs very swiftly. Secondly, He believes that Christ could heal a sick child, but not that he could raise a dead child, and therefore, "O come down, ere my child die," as if then it would be too late; whereas Christ has the same power over death that he has over bodily diseases. He forgot that Elijah and Elisha had raised dead children; and is Christ's power inferior to theirs? Observe what haste he is in: *Come down, ere my child die*; as if there were danger of Christ's slipping his time. *He that believeth does not make haste*, but refers himself to Christ. "Lord, what and when and how thou pleasest."

5. The answer of peace which Christ gave to his request at last (v. 50): *Go thy way, thy son liveth*. Christ here gives us an instance, (1.) Of his power, that he not only could heal, but could heal with so much ease, without the trouble of a visit. Here is nothing said, nothing done, nothing ordered to be done, and yet the cure wrought: *Thy son liveth*. The healing beams of the Sun of righteousness dispense benign influences from one end of heaven to another, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. Though Christ is now in heaven, and his church on earth, he can send from above. This nobleman would have Christ come down and heal his son; Christ will heal his son, and not come down. And thus the cure is the sooner wrought, the nobleman's mistake rectified, and his faith confirmed; so that the thing was better done in Christ's way. When he denies what we ask, he gives what is much more to our advantage; we ask for ease, he gives patience. Observe, His power was exerted by his word. In saying, *Thy son lives*, he showed that he has life in himself, and power to quicken whom he will. Christ's saying, *Thy soul lives*, makes it alive. (2.) Of his pity; he observed the nobleman to be in pain about his son, and his natural affection discovered itself in that word, *Ere my child, my dear child, die*; and therefore Christ dropped the reproof, and gave him assurance of the recovery of his child; for he knows how a father pities his children.

6. The nobleman's belief of the word of Christ: He believed, and went away. Though Christ did not gratify him so far as to go down with him, he is satisfied with the method Christ took, and reckons he has gained his point. How quickly, how easily, is that which is lacking in our faith perfected by the word and power of Christ. Now he sees no sign or wonder, and yet believes the wonder done. (1.) Christ said, *Thy son liveth*, and the man believed him; not only believed the omniscience of Christ, that he knew the child had recovered, but the omnipotence of Christ, that the cure was effected by his word. He

left him dying; yet, when Christ said, *He lives*, like the father of the faithful, against hope he believed in hope, and staggered not through unbelief. (2.) Christ said, *Go thy way*; and, as an evidence of the sincerity of his faith, he went his way, and gave neither Christ nor himself any further disturbance. He did not press Christ to come down, did not say, "If he do recover, yet a visit will be acceptable; no, he seems no further solicitous, but, like Hannah, he goes his way, and his countenance is no more sad. As one entirely satisfied, he made no great haste home; did not hurry home that night, but returned leisurely, as one that was perfectly easy in his own mind.

7. The further confirmation of his faith, by comparing notes with his servants at his return. (1.) His servants met him with the agreeable news of the child's recovery, v. 51. Probably they met him not far from his own house, and, knowing what their master's cares were, they were willing as soon as they could to make him easy. David's servants were loth to tell him when the child was dead. Christ said, *Thy son liveth*; and now the servants say the same. Good news will meet those that hope in God's word. (2.) He enquired what hour the child began to recover (v. 52); not as if he doubted the influence of Christ's word upon the child's recovery, but he was desirous to have his faith confirmed, that he might be able to satisfy any to whom he should mention the miracle; for it was a material circumstance. Note, [1.] It is good to furnish ourselves with all the corroborating proofs and evidences that may be, to strengthen our faith in the word of Christ, that it may grow up to a full assurance. Show me a token for good. [2.] The diligent comparison of the works of Christ with his word will be of great use to us for the confirming of our faith. This was the course the nobleman took: He enquired of the servants the hour when he began to amend; and they told him, *Yesterday at the seventh hour* (at one o'clock in the afternoon, or, as some think this evangelist reckons, at seven o'clock at night) the fever left him; not only he began to amend, but he was perfectly well on a sudden; so the father knew that it was at the same hour when Jesus said to him, *Thy son liveth*. As the word of God, well-studied, will help us to understand his providences, so the providence of God, well observed, will help us to understand his word; for God is every day fulfilling the scripture. Two things would help to confirm his faith:—First, That the child's recovery was sudden and not gradual. They name the precise time to an hour: *Yesterday, not about, but at the seventh hour, the fever left him*; not it abated, or began to decrease, but it left him in an instant. The word of Christ did not work like physic, which must have time to operate, and produce the effect, and perhaps cures by



*expectation only*; no, with Christ it was *dictum factum—he spoke and it was done*; not, He spoke and it was *set a doing*. Secondly, That it was just at the same time that Christ spoke to him: *at that very hour*. The synchronisms and coincidents of events add very much to the beauty and harmony of Providence. Observe the *time*, and the *thing* itself will be more illustrious, for every thing is beautiful *in its time*; at the very time when it is *promised*, as Israel's deliverance (Exod. xii. 41); at the very time when it is *prayed for*, as Peter's deliverance, Acts xii. 12. In men's works, distance of place is the delay of time and the retarding of business; but it is not so in the works of Christ. The pardon, and peace, and comfort, and spiritual healing, which he speaks in heaven, are, if he pleases, at the same time effected and wrought in the souls of believers; and, when these two come to be *compured* in the great day, Christ will be *glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*.

8. The *happy effect and issue of this*. The bringing of the cure to the family brought salvation to it. (1.) The nobleman *himself believed*. He had before *believed* the word of Christ, with reference to this particular occasion; but now he *believed in Christ* as the Messiah promised, and became one of his disciples. Thus the *particular* experience of the power and efficacy of *one word of Christ* may be a happy means to introduce and settle the whole authority of Christ's dominion in the soul. Christ has many ways of gaining the heart, and by the grant of a *temporal* mercy may make way for *better things*. (2.) His *whole house* believed likewise. [1.] Because of the *interest* they all had in the miracle, which preserved the *blossom* and *hopes* of the family; this affected them all, and endeared Christ to them, and recommended him to their best thoughts. [2.] Because of the *influence* the master of the family had upon them *all*. A master of a family cannot give faith to those under his charge, nor *force* them to believe, but he may be instrumental to remove *external prejudices*, which obstruct the operation of the evidence, and then the work is more than half done. Abraham was famous for this (Gen. xviii. 19), and Joshua, ch. xxiv. 15. This was a *nobleman*, and probably he had a *great household*; but, when he comes into Christ's school, he brings them all along with him. What a blessed change was here in this house, occasioned by the sickness of the child! This should reconcile us to afflictions; we know not what good may follow from them. Probably, the conversion of this *nobleman* and his family at Capernaum might induce Christ to come afterwards, and settle at Capernaum, as his head-quarters in Galilee. When great men receive the gospel, they may be instrumental to bring it to the places where they live.

9. Here is the evangelist's remark upon this

cure (v. 54); *This is the second miracle*, referring to ch. ii. 11, where the turning of water into wine is said to be the first; that was soon after his first return out of Judea, this soon after his second. In Judea he had wrought many miracles, ch. iii. 2; iv. 45. They had the first offer; but, being driven thence, he wrought miracles in Galilee. Somewhere or other Christ will find a welcome. People may, if they please, shut the sun out of *their own houses*, but they cannot shut it out of *the world*. This is noted to be the *second* miracle, 1. To remind us of the first, wrought in the same place some months before. *Fresh* mercies should revive the remembrance of former mercies, as former mercies should encourage our hopes of further mercies. Christ keeps account of his favours, whether we do or no. 2. To let us know that *this cure was before* those many cures which the other evangelists mention to be wrought in Galilee, Matt. iv. 23; Mark i. 34; Luke iv. 40. Probably, the patient being a person of quality, the cure was the more talked of and sent him crowds of patients; when this nobleman applied himself to Christ, multitudes followed. What abundance of good may great men do, if they be good men!

#### CHAP. V.

We have in the gospels a faithful record of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, Acts i. 1. These two are interwoven because what he taught explained what he did, and what he did confirmed what he taught. Accordingly, we have in this chapter a miracle and a sermon. 1. The miracle was the cure of an impotent man that had been diseased thirty-eight years, with the circumstances of that cure, ver. 1–16. 11. The sermon was Christ's vindication of himself before the sanhedrim, when he was prosecuted as a criminal for healing the man on the sabbath day, in which, 1. He asserts his authority as Messiah, and Mediator between God and man, ver. 17–29. 2. He proves it by the testimony of his Father, of John Baptist, of his miracles, and of the scriptures of the Old Testament, and condemns the Jews for their unbelief, ver. 30–47.

AFTER this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. 5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? 7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I

have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming another step-peth down before me. 8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. 9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. 10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry *thy* bed. 11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. 12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? 13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in *that* place. 14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. 15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. 16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

This miraculous cure is not recorded by any other of the evangelists, who confine themselves mostly to the miracles wrought in Galilee, but John relates those wrought at Jerusalem. Concerning this observe,

I. *The time when this cure was wrought:* it was at a *feast of the Jews*, that is, the passover, for that was the most celebrated feast. Christ, though residing in Galilee, yet *went up to Jerusalem* at the feast, v. 1. 1. Because it was an *ordinance of God*, which, as a *subject*, he would observe, being made under the law; though as a *Son* he might have pleaded an exemption. Thus he would teach us to attend religious assemblies. Heb. x. 25. 2. Because it was an *opportunity of good*; for, (1.) there were great numbers gathered together there at that time; it was a general rendezvous, at least of all serious thinking people, from all parts of the country, besides proselytes from other nations: and Wisdom must *cry in the places of concourse*, Prov. i. 21. (2.) It was to be hoped that they were in a *good frame*, for they came together to *worship God* and to spend their time in religious exercises. Now a mind *inclined to devotion*, and sequestering itself to the exercises of piety, *lies very open* to the

further discoveries of divine light and love, and to it Christ will be acceptable.

II. *The place where this cure was wrought:* at the *pool of Bethesda*, which had a miraculous healing virtue in it, and is here particularly described, v. 2—4.

1. Where it was situated: *At Jerusalem, by the sheep-market*; ἐπὶ τῇ προβαρικῇ. It might as well be rendered the *sheep-cote*, where the sheep were kept, or the *sheep-gate*, which we read of, Neh. iii. 1, through which the sheep were brought, as the *sheep-market* where they were sold. Some think it was near the temple, and, if so, it yielded a melancholy but profitable spectacle to those that went up to the temple to pray.

2. How it was called: It was a *pool* (a pond or bath), which is called in Hebrew, *Bethesda—the house of mercy*; for therein appeared much of the *mercy of God* to the sick and diseased. In a world of so much misery as this is, it is well that there are some *Bethsedas—houses of mercy* (remedies against those maladies), that the scene is not all melancholy. An *alms-house*, so Dr. Hammond. Dr. Lightfoot's conjecture is that this was the *upper pool* (Isa. vii. 3), and the *old pool*, Isa. xxii. 11; that it had been used for *washing* from ceremonial pollutions, for convenience of which the porches were built to dress and undress in, but it was lately become medicinal.

3. How it was fitted up: It had *five porches, cloisters, piazzas, or roofed walks*, in which the sick lay. Thus the charity of men concurred with the mercy of God for the relief of the distressed. Nature has provided *remedies*, but men must provide *hospitals*.

4. How it was frequented with sick and cripples (v. 3): *In these lay a great multitude of impotent folks*. How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! How full of complaints are all places, and what multitudes of impotent folks! It may do us good to visit the hospitals sometimes, that we may take occasion, from the calamities of others, to thank God for our comforts. The evangelist specifies three sorts of diseased people that lay here, *blind, halt, and withered* or *sinew-shrunk*, either in one particular part, as the man with the *withered hand*, or all over paralytic. These are mentioned because, being least able to help themselves into the water, they lay longest waiting in the *porches*. Those that were sick of these bodily diseases took the pains to come *far* and had the patience to wait *long* for a cure; any of us would have done the same, and we ought to do so but O that men were as wise for their souls, and as solicitous to get their spiritual diseases healed! We are all by nature *impotent folks* in spiritual things, *blind, halt, and withered*; but effectual provision is made for our cure if we will but observe orders.

5. What virtue it had for the cure of these impotent folks (v. 4): *An angel went down, and troubled the water*; and *whoso first step-*



ped in was made whole. That this strange virtue in the pool was *natural*, or *artificial* rather, and was the effect of the washing of the sacrifices, which impregnated the water with I know not what healing virtue even for *blind* people, and that the angel was a *messenger*, a common person, sent down to stir the water, is altogether groundless; there was a room in the temple on purpose to wash the sacrifices in. Expositors generally agree that the virtue this pool had was supernatural. It is true the Jewish writers, who are not sparing in recounting the praises of Jerusalem, do none of them make the least mention of this *healing pool*, of which silence in this matter perhaps this is the reason, that it was taken for a presage of the near approach of the Messiah, and therefore those who denied him to be come industriously concealed such an indication of his coming; so that this is all the account we have of it. Observe,

(1.) The *preparation* of the medicine by an angel, who *went down into the pool*, and *stirred the water*. Angels are God's servants, and friends to mankind; and perhaps are more active in the removing of diseases (as evil angels in the inflicting of them) than we are aware of. Raphael, the apocryphal name of an angel, signifies *medicina Dei*—God's *physic*, or *physician* rather. See what mean offices the holy angels condescend to, for the good of men. If we would do the will of God as the angels do it, we must think nothing below us but sin. The *troubling of the water* was the signal given of the descent of the angel, as the *going upon the tops of the mulberry trees* was to David, and then they must *bestir themselves*. The waters of the sanctuary are then *healing* when they are put in *motion*. Ministers must *stir up the gift* that is in them. When they are cold and dull in their ministrations, the waters *settle* and are not apt to *heal*. The angel descended, to *stir the water*, not daily, perhaps not frequently, but at a *certain season*; some think, at the three solemn feasts, to grace those solemnities; or, *now and then*, as Infinite Wisdom saw fit. God is a free agent in dispensing his favours.

(2.) The *operation* of the medicine: *Whoever first stepped in was made whole*. Here is, [1.] a miraculous extent of the virtue as to the *diseases* cured; what disease soever it was, this water cured it. Natural and artificial baths are as *hurtful* in some cases as they are *useful* in others, but this was a remedy for every malady, even for those that came from contrary causes. The power of miracles *succeeds* where the power of nature *succumbs*. [2.] A miraculous limitation of the virtue as to the *persons* cured: He that first stepped in had the benefit; that is, he or they that stepped in immediately were cured, not those that lingered and came in afterwards. This teaches us to observe and improve our opportunities, and to *look about us*, that we slip not a season which may never

return. The angel *stirred* the waters, but left the diseased to themselves to *get in*. God has put virtue into the scriptures and ordinances, for he would have healed us; but, if we do not make a due improvement of them, it is our own fault, we *would not be healed*.

Now this is all the account we have of this *standing miracle*; it is uncertain when it began and when it ceased. Some conjecture it began when Eliashib the high priest began the building of the wall about Jerusalem, and sanctified it with prayer; and that God testified his acceptance by putting this virtue into the adjoining pool. Some think it began now lately at Christ's birth; nay, others at his baptism. Dr. Lightfoot, finding in *Josephus*, *Antiq.* lib. xv. cap. 7, mention of a great earthquake in the seventh year of Herod, thirty years before Christ's birth, supposed, since there used to be earthquakes at the descent of angels, that then the angel first descended to stir this water. Some think it ceased with this miracle, others at Christ's death; however, it is certain it had a gracious signification. *First*, it was a *token* of God's good will to that people, and an indication that, though they had been long without prophets and miracles, yet God had not *cast them off*; though they were now an oppressed despised people, and many were ready to say, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* God did hereby let them know that he had still a kindness for the *city of their solemnities*. We may hence take occasion to acknowledge with thankfulness God's power and goodness in the mineral waters, that contribute so much to the health of mankind; for God *made the fountains of water*, Rev. xiv. 7. *Secondly*, It was a type of the Messiah, who is the *fountain opened*; and was intended to raise people's expectations of him who is the *Sun of righteousness*, that arises *with healing under his wings*. These waters had formerly been used for purifying, now for healing, to signify both the *cleansing* and *curing* virtue of the blood of Christ, that incomparable bath, which *heals all our diseases*. The waters of Siloam, which filled this pool, signified the kingdom of David, and of Christ the Son of David (Isa. viii. 6); fitly therefore have they now this *sovereign* virtue put into them. The laver of regeneration is to us as Bethesda's pool, healing our spiritual diseases; not at certain seasons, but at all times. *Whoever will, let him come*.

III. The patient on whom this cure was wrought (v. 5): one that *had been infirm thirty-eight years*. 1. His *disease* was *grievous*: He had an *infirmity*, a weakness; he had lost the use of his limbs, at least on one side, as is usual in palsies. It is sad to have the body so disabled that, instead of being the soul's instrument, it is become, even in the affairs of this life, its burden. What reason have we to thank God for bodily



strength, to use it for him, and to pity those who are *his prisoners*! 2. The *duration* of it was *t tedious: Thirty-eight years*. He was lame longer than most live. Many are so long disabled for the offices of life that, as the psalmist complains, they seem to be *made in vain*; for suffering, not for service; born to be always dying. Shall we complain of one wearisome night, or one fit of illness, who perhaps for many years have scarcely known what it has been to be a day sick, when many others, better than we, have scarcely known what it has been to be a day well? Mr. Baxter's note on this passage is very affecting: "How great a mercy was it to live thirty-eight years under God's wholesome discipline! O my God, saith he, "I thank thee for the like discipline of fifty-eight years; how safe a life is this, in comparison of full prosperity and pleasure!"

IV. The cure and the circumstances of it briefly related, v. 6—9.

1. *Jesus saw him lie*. Observe, When Christ came up to Jerusalem he visited not the palaces, but the hospitals, which is an instance of his humility, and condescension, and tender compassion, and an *indication* of his great design in coming into the world, which was to seek and save the sick and wounded. There was a great multitude of poor cripples here at Bethesda, but Christ fastened his eye upon this one, and singled him out from the rest, because he was *senior* of the house, and in a more deplorable condition than any of the rest; and Christ delights to help the helpless, and hath mercy on *whom he will have mercy*. Perhaps his companions in tribulation insulted over him, because he had often been disappointed of a cure; therefore Christ took him for his patient: it is his honour to side with the weakest, and bear up those whom he sees *run down*.

2. He knew and considered *how long he had lain* in this condition. Those that have been long in affliction may comfort themselves with this, that God keeps account *how long*, and knows our frame.

3. He asked him, *Wilt thou be made whole?* A strange question to be asked one that had been so long ill. Some indeed would not be made whole, because their sores serve them to beg by and serve them for an excuse for idleness; but this poor man was as unable to *go a begging* as to *work*, yet Christ put it to him, (1.) To *express* his own pity and concern for him. Christ is tenderly inquisitive concerning the desires of those that are in affliction, and is willing to know *what is their petition*: "What shall I do for you?" (2.) To try him whether he would be beholden for a cure to him against whom the great people were so prejudiced and sought to prejudice others. (3.) To teach him to value the mercy, and to excite in him desires after it. In spiritual cases, people are not willing to be cured of their sins, are loth to part with them. If this point therefore were but gained,

if people were willing to be *made whole*, the work were half done, for Christ is willing to heal, if we be but willing to be healed, Matt. viii. 3.

4. The poor impotent man takes this opportunity to renew his complaint, and to set forth the misery of his case, which makes his cure the more illustrious: *Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool, v. 7*. He seems to take Christ's question as an imputation of carelessness and neglect: "If thou hadst had a mind to be healed, thou wouldest have looked better to thy hits, and have got into the healing waters long before now." "No, Master," saith the poor man, "it is not for want of a *good will*, but of a *good friend*, that I am unhealed. I have done what I could to help myself, but in vain, for no one else will help me." (1.) He does not think of any other way of being cured than by these waters, and desires no other friendship than to be helped into *them*; therefore, when Christ cured him, his imagination or expectation could not contribute to it, for he thought of no such thing. (2.) He complains for want of friends to help him in: "*I have no man, no friend to do me that kindness*." One would think that some of those who had been themselves healed should have lent him a hand; but it is common for the poor to be destitute of friends; *no man careth for their soul*. To the sick and impotent it is as true a piece of charity to work for them as to relieve them; and thus the poor are capable of being charitable to one another, and ought to be so, though we seldom find that they are so; I speak it to their shame. (3.) He bewails his infelicity, that very often when *he was coming another stepped in before him*. But a step between him and a cure, and yet he continues impotent. None had the charity to say, "Your case is worse than mine, do you go in now, and I will stay till the next time; for there is no getting over the old maxim, *Every one for himself*." Having been so often disappointed, he begins to despair, and now is Christ's time to come to his relief; he delights to help in desperate cases. Observe, How mildly this man speaks of the unkindness of those about him, without any peevish reflections. As we should be thankful for the least kindness, so we should be patient under the greatest contempts; and, let our resentments be ever so *just*, yet our expressions should ever be *calm*. And observe further, to his praise, that, though he had waited so long in vain, yet still he continued lying by the pool-side, hoping that some time or other help would come, Hab. ii. 3.

5. Our Lord Jesus hereupon cures him with a word speaking, though he neither asked it nor thought of it. Here is,

(1.) The word he said: *Rise, take up thy bed, v. 8*. [1.] He is bidden to *rise and walk*; a strange command to be given to an *impotent* man, that had been long disabled; but this divine word was to be the vehicle of a divine power; it was a command to the disease to be



gone, to nature to *be strong*, but it is expressed as a command to him to *bestir himself*. He must *rise and walk*, that is, attempt to do it, and in the *essay* he should receive strength to do it. The conversion of a sinner is the cure of a chronic disease; this is ordinarily done by the word, a word of command: *Arise, and walk; turn, and live; make ye a new heart*; which no more supposes a power in us to do it, without the grace of God, *distinguishing* grace, than this supposed such a power in the impotent man. But, if he had not attempted to help himself, he had not been cured, and he must have *borne the blame*; yet it does not therefore follow that, when he did rise and walk, it was by his own strength; no, it was by the power of Christ, and he must have all the glory. Observe, Christ did not bid him rise and go into the waters, but *rise and walk*. Christ did that for us which the law could not do, and set that aside. [2.] He is bidden to *take up his bed*. First, To make it to appear that it was a *perfect cure*, and purely miraculous; for he did not recover strength by degrees, but from the extremity of weakness and impotency he suddenly stepped into the highest degree of bodily strength; so that he was able to carry as great a load as any porter that had been as long *used* to it as he had been *disused*. He, who this minute was not able to turn himself in his bed, the next minute was able to carry his bed. The man sick of the palsy (Matt. ix. 6) was bidden to *go to his house*, but probably this man had no house to go to, the hospital was his home; therefore he is bidden to *rise and walk*. Secondly, It was to *proclaim* the cure, and make it public; for, being the sabbath day, whoever carried a burden through the streets made himself very remarkable, and every one would enquire what was the meaning of it; thereby notice of the miracle would spread, to the honour of God. Thirdly, Christ would thus witness against the tradition of the elders, which had stretched the law of the sabbath beyond its intention; and would likewise show that he was *Lord of the sabbath*, and had power to make what alterations he pleased about it, and to over-rule the law. Joshua, and the host of Israel, marched about Jericho on the sabbath day, when God commanded them; so did this man carry his bed, in obedience to a command. The case may be such that it may become a work of *necessity*, or *mercy*, to carry a bed on the sabbath day; but here it was more, it was a work of *piety*, being designed purely for the glory of God. Fourthly, He would hereby try the faith and obedience of his patient. By carrying his bed publicly, he exposed himself to the censure of the ecclesiastical court, and was liable, at least, to be *scourged in the synagogue*. Now, will he run the hazard of this, in obedience to Christ? Yes, he will. Those that have been *healed by Christ's word* should be *ruled by his word*, whatever it cost them.

(2.) The efficacy of this word (v. 9): a divine power went along with it, and immediately he was *made whole, took up his bed, and walked*. [1.] He felt the power of Christ's word healing him: *Immediately he was made whole*. What a joyful surprise was this to the poor cripple, to find himself all of a sudden so easy, so strong, so able to help himself! What a new world was he in, in an instant! Nothing is too hard for Christ to do. [2.] He obeyed the power of Christ's word commanding him. He *took up his bed and walked*, and did not care who blamed him or threatened him for it. The proof of our spiritual cure is our rising and walking. Hath Christ healed our spiritual diseases? Let us go whithersoever he sends us, and *take up* whatever he is pleased to lay upon us, and *walk before him*.

V. What became of the poor man after he was cured. We are here told,

1. What passed between him and the Jews who saw him carry his bed on the sabbath day; for on that day this cure was wrought, and it was the sabbath that fell within the passover week, and therefore a *high day*, ch. xix. 31. Christ's work was such that he needed not make any difference between sabbath days and other days, for he was always about his Father's business; but he wrought many remarkable cures on that day, perhaps to encourage his church to expect those spiritual favours from him, in their observance of the Christian sabbath, which were typified by his miraculous cures. Now here,

(1.) The Jews quarrelled with the man for carrying his bed on the sabbath day, telling him that *it was not lawful*, v. 10. It does not appear whether they were magistrates, who had power to *punish* him, or common people, who could only *inform* against him; but thus far was commendable, that, while they knew not by *what authority* he did it, they were jealous for the honour of the sabbath, and could not unconcernedly see it *profaned*; like Nehemiah. Neh. xiii. 17.

(2.) The man justified himself in what he did by a warrant that would bear him out, v. 11. "I do not do it in contempt of the law and the sabbath, but in obedience to one who, by *making me whole*, has given me an undeniable proof that he is greater than either. He that could work such a miracle as to *make me whole* no doubt might give me such a command as to carry *my bed*; he that could overrule the powers of nature no doubt might overrule a positive law, especially in an instance not of the essence of the law. He that was so kind as to make me whole would not be so unkind as to bid me do what is sinful." Christ, by curing another paralytic, proved his power to *forgive sin*, here to *give law*; if his pardons are valid, his edicts are so, and his miracles prove both.

(3.) The Jews enquired further who it was that gave him this warrant (v. 12): *What*

man is that? Observe, How industriously they overlooked that which might be a ground of their faith in Christ. They enquire not, no, not for curiosity, "Who is it that made thee whole?" While they industriously caught at that which might be a ground of reflection upon Christ (*What man is it who said unto thee, Take up thy bed?*) they would fain subpoena the patient to be witness against his physician, and to be his betrayer. In their question, observe, [1.] They resolve to look upon Christ as a mere man: *What man is that?* For, though he gave ever such convincing proofs of it, they were resolved that they would never own him to be the Son of God. [2.] They resolve to look upon him as a bad man, and take it for granted that he who bade this man carry his bed, whatever divine commission he might produce, was certainly a delinquent, and as such they resolve to prosecute him. *What man is that who durst give such orders?*

(4.) The poor man was unable to give them any account of him: *He wist not who he was, v. 13.*

[1.] Christ was unknown to him when he healed him. Probably he had heard of the name of Jesus, but had never seen him, and therefore could not tell that this was he. Note, Christ does many a good turn for those that know him not, Isa. xlv. 4, 5. He enlightens, strengthens, quickens, comforts us, and we wist not who he is; nor are aware how much we receive daily by his mediation. This man, being unacquainted with Christ, could not actually believe in him for a cure; but Christ knew the dispositions of his soul, and suited his favours to them, as to the blind man in a like case, ch. ix. 36. Our covenant and communion with God take rise, not so much from our knowledge of him, as from his knowledge of us. We know God, or, rather, are known of him, Gal. iv. 9.

[2.] For the present he kept himself unknown; for as soon as he had wrought the cure he conveyed himself away, he made himself unknown (so some read it), a multitude being in that place. This is mentioned to show, either, First, How Christ conveyed himself away—by retiring into the crowd, so as not to be distinguished from a common person. He that was the chief of ten thousand often made himself one of the throng. It is sometimes the lot of those who have by their services signalized themselves to be levelled with the multitude, and overlooked. Or, Secondly, Why he conveyed himself away, because there was a multitude there, and he industriously avoided both the applause of those who would admire the miracle and cry that up, and the censure of those who would censure him as a sabbath-breaker, and run him down. Those that are active for God in their generation must expect to pass through evil report and good report; and it is wisdom as much as may be to keep out of the hearing of both; lest by the one we be

exalted, and by the other depressed, above measure. Christ left the miracle to commend itself, and the man on whom it was wrought to justify it.

2. What passed between him and our Lord Jesus at their next interview, v. 14. Observe here,

(1.) Where Christ found him: in the temple, the place of public worship. In our attendance on public worship we may expect to meet with Christ, and improve our acquaintance with him. Observe, [1.] Christ went to the temple. Though he had many enemies, yet he appeared in public, because there he bore his testimony to divine institutions, and had opportunity of doing good. [2.] The man that was cured went to the temple. There Christ found him the same day, as it should seem, that he was healed; thither he straightway went, First, Because he had, by his infirmity, been so long detained thence. Perhaps he had not been there for thirty-eight years, and therefore, as soon as ever the embargo is taken off, his first visit shall be to the temple, as Hezekiah intimates his shall be (Isa. xxxviii. 22): *What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?* Secondly, Because he had by his recovery a good errand thither; he went up to the temple to return thanks to God for his recovery. When God has at any time restored us our health we ought to attend him with solemn praises (Ps. cxvi. 18, 19), and the sooner the better, while the sense of the mercy is fresh. Thirdly, Because he had, by carrying his bed, seemed to put a contempt on the sabbath, he would thus show that he had an honour for it, and made conscience of sabbath-sanctification, in that on which the chief stress of it is laid, which is the public worship of God. Works of necessity and mercy are allowed; but when they are over we must go to the temple.

(2.) What he said to him. When Christ has cured us, he has not done with us; he now applies himself to the healing of his soul, and this by the word too. [1.] He gives him a memento of his cure: *Behold thou art made whole.* He found himself made whole, yet Christ calls his attention to it. *Behold, consider* it seriously, how sudden, how strange, how cheap, how easy, the cure was: *admire it; behold, and wonder: remember it;* let the impressions of it abide, and never be lost, Isa. xxxviii. 9. [2.] He gives him a caution against sin, in consideration hereof, *Being made whole, sin no more.* This implies that his disease was the punishment of sin; whether of some remarkably flagrant sin, or only of sin in general, we cannot tell, but we know that sin is the procuring cause of sickness, Ps. cvii. 17, 18. Some observe that Christ did not make mention of sin to any of his patients, except to this impotent man, and another who was in like manner diseased, Mark ii. 5. While those chronic diseases



lasted, they prevented the outward acts of many sins, and therefore watchfulness was the more necessary when the disability was removed. Christ intimates that those who are *made whole*, who are eased of the present sensible punishment of sin, are in danger of *returning* to sin when the terror and restraint are over, unless divine grace dry up the fountain. When the trouble which only dammed up the current is over, the waters will return to their old course; and therefore there is great need of watchfulness, lest after healing mercy we return again to folly. The *misery* we were *made whole from* warns us to sin no more, having felt the smart of sin; the *mercy* we were *made whole by* is an engagement upon us not to offend him who healed us. This is the voice of every providence, *Go and sin no more*. This man began his new life very hopefully *in the temple*, yet Christ saw it necessary to give him this caution; for it is common for people, when they are sick, to *promise much*, when newly recovered to *perform something*, but after awhile to *forget all*. [3.] He gives him warning of his danger, in case he should return to his former sinful course: *Lest a worse thing come to thee*. Christ, who knows all men's hearts, knew that he was one of those that must be *frightened from sin*. Thirty-eight years' lameness, one would think, was a thing bad enough; yet there is something worse that will come to him if he relapse into sin after God has *given him such a deliverance* as this, Ezra ix. 13, 14. The hospital where he lay was a melancholy place, but hell is much more so: the doom of apostates is a worse thing than thirty-eight years' lameness.

VI. Now, after this interview between Christ and his patient, observe in the two following verses, 1. The notice which the poor simple man gave to the Jews concerning Christ, v. 15. He told them it was Jesus that had *made him whole*. We have reason to think that he intended this for the honour of Christ and the benefit of the Jews, little thinking that he who had so much power and goodness could have *any* enemies; but those who wish well to Christ's kingdom must have the *wisdom of the serpent*, lest they do more hurt than good with their zeal, and must not cast pearls before swine. 2. The rage and enmity of the Jews against him: *Therefore did the rulers of the Jews persecute Jesus*. See, (1.) How absurd and unreasonable their enmity to Christ was. *Therefore*, because he had made a poor sick man well, and so eased the public charge, upon which, it is likely, he had subsisted; *therefore* they persecuted him, because he did good in Israel. (2.) How bloody and cruel it was: *They sought to slay him*; nothing less than his blood, his life, would satisfy them. (3.) How it was varnished over with a colour of zeal for the honour of the sabbath; for this was the pretended

crime, *Because he had done these things on the sabbath day*, as if that circumstance were enough to vitiate the best and most divine actions, and to render *him* obnoxious whose deeds were otherwise most meritorious. Thus hypocrites often cover their real enmity against the *power* of godliness with a pretended zeal for the *form* of it.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. 19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. 21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. 22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23 That all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. 26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; 27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. 28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the

resurrection of damnation. 30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

We have here Christ's discourse upon occasion of his being accused as a sabbath-breaker, and it seems to be his vindication of himself before the sanhedrim, when he was arraigned before them: whether on the same day, or two or three days after, does not appear; probably the same day. Observe,

I. The doctrine laid down, by which he justified what he did on the sabbath day (v. 17): *He answered them.* This supposes that he had something laid to his charge: or what they suggested one to another, when they sought to slay him (v. 16), he *knew*, and gave this reply to, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* At other times, in answer to the like charge, he had pleaded the example of David's eating the show-bread, of the priests' slaying the sacrifices, and of the people's watering their cattle on the sabbath day; but here he goes higher and alleges the example of his Father and his divine authority; waiving all other pleas, he insists upon that which was *instar omnium*—equivalent to the whole, and abides by it, which he had mentioned, Matt. xii. 8. *The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day;* but he here enlarges on it. 1. He pleads that he was the *Son of God*, plainly intimated in his calling *God his Father*; and, if so, his holiness was unquestionable and his sovereignty incontestable; and he might make what alterations he pleased of the divine law. *Surely they will reverence the Son*, the heir of all things. 2. That he was a worker together with God. (1.) *My Father worketh hitherto.* The example of God's resting on the seventh day from all his work is, in the fourth commandment, made the ground of our observing it as a *sabbath or day of rest.* Now God rested only from such work as he had done the six days before; otherwise he *worketh hitherto*, he is every day working, sabbath days and week-days; upholding and governing all the creatures, and concurring by his common providence to all the motions and operations of nature, *to his own glory*; therefore, when we are appointed to rest on the sabbath day, yet we are not restrained from doing that which has a direct tendency to the *glory of God*, as the man's carrying his bed had. (2.) *I work;* not only therefore *I may work, like him*, in doing good on sabbath days as well as other days, but *I also work with him.* As God created all things by Christ, so he supports and governs all by him, Heb. i. 3. This sets what he does above all exception; he that is so great a worker must needs be an uncontrollable governor; he that does all is Lord of all, and therefore *Lord of the sab-*

*bath*, which particular branch of his authority he would now assert, because he was shortly to show it further, in the change of the day from the seventh to the first.

II. The offence that was taken at his doctrine (v. 18): *The Jews sought the more to kill him.* His defence was made his offence, as if by justifying himself he had made bad worse. Note, Those that will not be enlightened by the word of Christ will be enraged and exasperated by it, and nothing more vexes the enemies of Christ than his asserting his authority; see Ps. ii. 3—5. They sought to kill him,

1. Because he had broken the sabbath; for, let him say what he would in his own justification, they are resolved, right or wrong, to find him guilty, of sabbath breaking. When malice and envy sit upon the bench, reason and justice may even be silent at the bar, for whatever they can say will undoubtedly be over-ruled.

2. Not only so, but he had said also *that God was his Father.* Now they pretend a jealousy for *God's honour*, as before for the sabbath day, and charge Christ with it as a heinous crime that he made himself equal with God; and a heinous crime it had been if he had not really been so. It was the sin of Lucifer, *I will be like the Most High.* Now, (1.) This was justly inferred from what he said, that he was the *Son of God*, and that God was his Father, *πατήρα ἰδίον*—his own Father; his, so as he was no one's else. He had said that he worked with his Father, by the same authority and power, and hereby he made himself equal with God. *Ecce intelligunt Judæi, quod non intelligunt Ariani*—Behold, the Jews understand what the Arians do not. (2.) Yet it was unjustly imputed to him as an offence that he equalled himself with God, for he was and is God, equal with the Father (Phil. ii. 6); and therefore Christ, in answer to this charge, does not except against the innuendo as strained or forced, makes out his claim and proves that he is equal with God in power and glory.

III. Christ's discourse upon this occasion, which continues without interruption to the end of the chapter. In these verses he explains, and afterwards confirms, his commission, as Mediator and plenipotentiary in the treaty between God and man. And, as the honours he is hereby entitled to are such as it is not fit for any creature to receive, so the work he is hereby entrusted with is such as it is not possible for any creature to go through with, and therefore he is God, equal with the Father.

1. *In general.* He is one with the Father in all he does as Mediator, and there was a perfectly good understanding between them in the whole matter. It is ushered in with a solemn preface (v. 19): *Verily, verily, I say unto you;* I the Amen, the Amen, say it. This intimates that the things declared are, (1.) Very awful and great, and such as should



command the most serious attention. (2.) Very sure, and such as should command an unfeigned assent. (3.) That they are matters purely of divine revelation; things which Christ has told us, and which we could not otherwise have come to the knowledge of. Two things he saith in general concerning the Son's oneness with the Father in working:—

[1.] That the Son *conforms to the Father* (v. 19): *The Son can do nothing of himself but what he sees the Father do; for these things does the Son.* The Lord Jesus, as Mediator, is, *First, Obedient to his Father's will*; so entirely obedient that he can do nothing of himself, in the same sense as it is said, *God cannot lie, cannot deny himself*, which expresses the perfection of his truth, not any imperfection in his strength; so here, Christ was so entirely devoted to his Father's will that it was impossible for him in any thing to act separately. *Secondly, He is observant of his Father's counsel*; he can, he will, do nothing but what he sees the Father do: No man can find out the work of God, but the only-begotten Son, who lay in his bosom, sees what he does, is intimately acquainted with his purposes, and has the plan of them ever before him. What he did as Mediator, throughout his whole undertaking, was the exact transcript or counterpart of what the Father did; that is, what he designed, when he formed the plan of our redemption in his eternal counsels, and settled those measures in every thing which never could be broken, nor ever needed to be altered. It was the copy of that great original; it was Christ's faithfulness, as it was Moses's, that he did all according to the pattern shown him in the mount. This is expressed in the present tense, what he sees the Father do, for the same reason that, when he was here upon earth, it was said, He is in heaven (ch. iii. 13), and is in the bosom of the Father (ch. i. 18); as he was even then by his divine nature present in heaven, so the things done in heaven were present to his knowledge. What the Father did in his counsels, the Son had ever in his view, and still he had his eye upon it, as David in spirit spoke of him, *I have set the Lord always before me*, Ps. xvi. 8. *Thirdly, Yet he is equal with the Father in working*; for what things soever the Father does these also does the Son likewise; he did the same things, not such things, but *τὰ αὐτά, the same things*; and he did them in the same manner, *ὁμοίως likewise*, with the same authority, and liberty, and wisdom, the same energy and efficacy. Does the Father enact, repeal, and alter, positive laws? Does he over-rule the course of nature, know men's hearts? So does the Son. The power of the Mediator is a divine power.

[2.] That the Father communicates to the Son, v. 20. Observe,

*First, The inducement to it: The Father loveth the Son*; he declared, *This is my beloved Son*. He had not only a good will to the undertaking but an infinite complacency

in the undertaker. Christ was now hated of men, one whom the nation abhorred (Isa. xlix. 7); but he comforted himself with this, that his Father loved him.

*Secondly, The instances of it.* He shows it, 1. In what he does communicate to him. *He shows him all things that himself doth.* The Father's measures in making and ruling the world are shown to the Son, that he may take the same measures in framing and governing the church, which work was to be a duplicate of the work of creation and providence, and it is therefore called *the world to come*. He shows him all things *ἀ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ—which he does*, that is, which the Son does, so it might be construed; all that the Son does is by direction from the Father; he shows him. 2. In what he will communicate; he will show him, that is, will appoint and direct him to do greater works than these. (1.) Works of greater power than the curing of the impotent man; for he should raise the dead, and should himself rise from the dead. By the power of nature, with the use of means, a disease may possibly in time be cured; but nature can never, by the use of any means, in any time raise the dead. (2.) Works of greater authority than warranting the man to carry his bed on the sabbath day. They thought this a daring attempt; but what was this to his abrogating the whole ceremonial law, and instituting new ordinances, which he would shortly do, "*that you may marvel!*" Now they looked upon his works with contempt and indignation, but he will shortly do that which they will look upon with amazement, Luke vii. 16. Many are brought to marvel at Christ's works, whereby he has the honour of them, who are not brought to believe, by which they would have the benefit of them.

2. *In particular.* He proves his equality with the Father, by specifying some of those works which he does that are the peculiar works of God. This is enlarged upon, v. 21—30. He does, and shall do, that which is the peculiar work of God's almighty power—*raising the dead and giving life*, v. 21, 25, 26, 28. He does, and shall do, that which is the peculiar work of God's sovereign dominion and jurisdiction—*judging and executing judgment*, v. 22—24, 27. These two are interwoven, as being nearly connected; and what is said once is repeated and inculcated; put both together, and they will prove that Christ said not amiss when he made himself equal with God.

(1.) Observe what is here said concerning the Mediator's power to raise the dead and give life. See [1.] His authority to do it (v. 21): *As the Father raiseth up the dead, so the Son quickeneth whom he will.* First, It is God's prerogative to raise the dead, and give life, even his who first breathed into man the breath of life, and so made him a living soul; see Deut. xxxii. 39; 1 Sam. ii. 6; Ps. lxxvii. 20; Rom. iv. 17. This God had done by the

prophets Elijah and Elisha, and it was a confirmation of their mission. A resurrection from the dead never lay in the common road of nature, nor ever fell within the thought of those that studied only the compass of nature's power, one of whose received axioms was point blank against it: *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus—Existence, when once extinguished, cannot be rekindled.* It was therefore ridiculed at Athens as an absurd thing, Acts xvii. 32. It is purely the work of a divine power, and the knowledge of it purely by divine revelation. This the Jews would own. Secondly, The Mediator is invested with this prerogative: *He quickens whom he will*; raises to life whom he pleases, and when he pleases. He does not enliven things by natural necessity, as the sun does, whose beams revive of course; but he acts as a free agent, has the dispensing of his power in his own hand, and is never either constrained, or restrained, in the use of it. As he has the power, so he has the wisdom and sovereignty, of a God; has the *key of the grave and of death* (Rev. i. 18), not as a servant, to open and shut as he is bidden, for he has it as the *key of David*, which he is master of, Rev. iii. 7. An absolute prince is described by this (Dan. v. 19): *Whom he would he slew or kept alive*; it is true of Christ without hyperbole.

[2.] His ability to do it. Therefore he has power to quicken whom he will as the Father does, because *he has life in himself, as the Father has*, v. 26. First, It is certain that the Father *has life in himself*. Not only he is a *self-existent* Being, who does not derive from, or depend upon, any other (Exod. iii. 14), but he is a sovereign giver of life; he has the disposal of life in himself; and of all good (for so *life* sometimes signifies); it is all derived from him, and dependent on him. He is to his creatures the fountain of life, and all good; author of their being and well-being; the living God, and the God of all living. Secondly, It is as certain that he has *given to the Son to have life in himself*. As the Father is the original of all natural life and good, being the great Creator, so the Son, as Redeemer, is the original of all spiritual life and good; is that to the church which the Father is to the world; see 1 Cor. viii. 6; Col. i. 19. The kingdom of grace, and all the life in that kingdom, are as fully and absolutely in the hand of the Redeemer as the kingdom of providence is in the hand of the Creator; and as God, who gives being to all things, has his being of himself, so Christ, who gives life, raised himself to life by his own power, ch. x. 18.

[3.] His acting according to this authority and ability. Having *life in himself*, and being authorized to *quicken whom he will*, by virtue hereof there are, accordingly, two resurrections performed by his powerful word, both which are here spoken of:—

First, A resurrection that *now is* (v. 29),

a resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, by the power of Christ's grace. *The hour is coming, and now is.* It is a resurrection begun already, and further to be carried on, *when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.* This is plainly distinguished from that in v. 28, which speaks of the resurrection at the end of time. This says nothing, as that does, of the dead in their graves, and of all of them, and their coming forth. Now, 1. Some think this was fulfilled in those whom he miraculously raised to life, Jairus's daughter, the widow's son, and Lazarus; and it is observable that all whom Christ raised were *spoken to*, as, *Damuel, arise*; *Young man, arise*; *Lazarus, come forth*; whereas those raised under the Old Testament were raised, not by a word, but other applications, 1 Kings xvii. 21; 2 Kings iv. 34; xiii. 21. Some understand it of those saints that rose with Christ; but we do not read of the *voice of the Son of God* calling them. But, 2. I rather understand it of the power of the doctrine of Christ, for the recovering and quickening of those that were *dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1. *The hour was coming* when dead souls should be made alive by the *preaching* of the gospel, and a spirit of life from God accompanying it: nay, *it then was*, while Christ was upon earth. It may refer especially to the *calling of the Gentiles*, which is said to be as life from the dead, and, some think, was prefigured by Ezekiel's vision (ch. xxxvii. 1), and foretold, Isa. xxvi. 19. *Thy dead men shall live.* But it is to be applied to all the wonderful success of the gospel, among both Jews and Gentiles; an hour which still is, and is still *coming*, till all the elect be effectually called. Note, (1.) Sinners are spiritually *dead*, destitute of spiritual life, sense, strength, and motion, dead to God, miserable, but neither sensible of their misery nor able to help themselves out of it. (2.) The conversion of a soul to God is its resurrection from death to life; then it begins to live when it begins to *live to God*, to breathe after him, and move towards him. (3.) It is by the *voice of the Son of God* that souls are raised to spiritual life; it is wrought by his power, and that power conveyed and communicated by his word: *The dead shall hear*, shall be made to hear, to understand, receive, and believe, the *voice of the Son of God*, to hear it as his voice; then the Spirit by it gives life, otherwise the *letter kills*. (4.) The voice of Christ must be heard by us, that we may live by it. They that hear, and attend to what they hear, shall live. *Hear and your soul shall live*, Isa. lv. 3.

Secondly, A resurrection yet to come; this is spoken of, v. 28, 29, introduced with, *Marvel not at this*, which I have said of the *first* resurrection, do not reject it as incredible and absurd, for at the end of time you shall all see a more sensible and amazing proof of the power and authority of the Son of man." As *his own* resurrection was re-



served to be the final and concluding proof of his personal commission, so the resurrection of *all men* is reserved to be a like proof of his commission to be executed by his spirit. Now observe here,

a. When this resurrection shall be: *The hour is coming*; it is fixed to an hour, so very punctual is this great appointment. The judgment is not adjourned *sine die*—to some time not yet pitched upon; no, *he hath appointed a day. The hour is coming.* (a.) It is not yet come, it is not the hour spoken of at v. 25, that is coming, and now is. Those erred dangerously who said that the resurrection was past already, 2 Tim. ii. 18. But, (b.) *It will certainly come*, it is coming on, nearer every day than other; it is at the door. How far off it is we know not; but we know that it is infallibly designed and unalterably determined.

b. Who shall be raised: *All that are in the graves*, all that have died from the beginning of time, and all that shall die to the end of time. It was said (Dan. xii. 2), *Many shall arise*; Christ here tells us that those *many* shall be *all*; *all* must appear before the Judge, and therefore *all* must be raised; every person, and the whole of every person; every soul shall return to its body, and every bone to its bone. The grave is the prison of dead bodies, where they are *detained*; their furnace, where they are *consumed* (Job xxiv. 19); yet, in prospect of their resurrection, we may call it their *bed*, where they sleep to be *awaked* again; their treasury, where they are laid up to be used again. Even those that are not *put into graves* shall arise; but, because most are put into graves, Christ uses this expression, *all that are in the graves*. The Jews used the word *sheol* for the grave, which signifies *the state of the dead*; all that are in that state shall hear.

c. How they shall be raised. Two things are here told us:—(a.) The efficient of this resurrection: *They shall hear his voice*; that is, he shall cause them to hear it, as Lazarus was made to hear that word, *Come forth*; a divine power shall go along with the voice, to put life into them, and enable them to obey it. When Christ rose, there was no voice heard, not a word spoken, because he rose by his own power; but at the resurrection of the children of men we find three voices spoken of, 1 Thess. iv. 16. The Lord shall descend with a shout, the shout of a king, with the voice of the archangel; either Christ himself, the prince of the angels, or the commander-in-chief, under him, of the heavenly hosts; and with the trumpet of God: the soldier's trumpet sounding the alarm of war, the judge's trumpet publishing the summons to the court. (b.) The effect of it: *They shall come forth* out of their graves, as prisoners out of their prison-house; they shall *arise out of the dust*, and shake themselves from it; see Isa. lii. 1, 2, 11. But this is not all; they shall *appear* before Christ's tribunal, shall *come forth* as

those that are to be tried, *come forth* to the bar, publicly to receive their doom.

d. To what they shall be raised; to a different state of happiness or misery, according to their different character; to a state of retribution, according to what they did in the state of probation.

(a.) *They that have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life*; they shall live again, to live for ever. Note, [a.] Whatever name men are called by, or whatever plausible profession they make, it will be well in the great day with those only that have *done good*, have done that which is pleasing to God and profitable to others. [b.] The resurrection of the body will be a resurrection of life to all those, and those only, that have been sincere and constant in *doing good*. They shall not only be publicly *acquitted*, as a pardoned criminal, we say, has *his life*, but they shall be *admitted* into the presence of God, and that is life, it is better than life; they shall be *attended* with comforts in perfection. To live is to be *happy*, and they shall be *advanced* above the fear of death; that is *life* indeed in which *mortality* is for ever swallowed up.

(b.) *They that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation*; they shall live again, to be for ever dying. The Pharisees thought that the resurrection pertained only to the just, but Christ here rectifies that mistake. Note, [a.] *Evil doers*, whatever they pretend, will be treated in the day of judgment as *evil men*. [b.] The resurrection will be to evil doers, who did not by repentance undo what they had done amiss, a *resurrection* of damnation. They shall come forth to be publicly convicted of rebellion against God, and publicly *condemned* to everlasting punishment; to be *sentenced* to it, and immediately *sent* to it without reprieve. Such will the resurrection be.

(2.) Observe what is here said concerning the Mediator's authority to *execute judgment*, v. 22—24, 27. As he has an almighty power, so he has a sovereign jurisdiction; and who so fit to preside in the great affairs of the other life as he who is the Father and fountain of life? Here is,

[1.] Christ's commission or delegation to the office of a judge, which is twice spoken of here (v. 22): *He hath committed all judgment to the Son*; and again (v. 27): *He hath given him authority*.

First, *The Father judges no man*; not that the Father hath resigned the government, but he is pleased to govern by Jesus Christ; so that man is not under the terror of dealing with God immediately, but has the comfort of access to him by a Mediator. The *Father judges no man*; that is, 1. He does not rule us by the mere right of creation, but by covenant, and upon certain terms settled by a Mediator. Having made us, he may do what he pleases with us, as the potter with the clay; yet he does not take advantage of this,

but draws us with the cords of a man. 2 He does not determine our everlasting condition by the covenant of innocency, nor take the advantage he has against us for the violation of that covenant. The Mediator having undertaken to make a vicarious satisfaction, the matter is referred to him, and God is willing to enter upon a new treaty; not under the law of the Creator, but the grace of the Redeemer.

Secondly, He has committed all judgment to the Son, has constituted him Lord of all (Acts x. 36; Rom. xiv. 9), as Joseph in Egypt, Gen. xli. 40. This was prophesied of, Ps. lxxii. 1; Isa. xi. 3, 4; Jer. xxiii. 5; Mic. v. 1—4; Ps. lxxvii. 4; xcvii. 13; xcvi. 9. All judgment is committed to our Lord Jesus; for, 1. He is entrusted with the administration of the providential kingdom, is head over all things (Eph. i. 22), head of every man, 1 Cor. xi. 3. All things consist by him, Col. i. 17. 2. He is empowered to make laws immediately to bind conscience. I say unto you is now the form in which the statutes of the kingdom of heaven run. Be it enacted by the Lord Jesus, and by his authority. All the acts now in force are touched with his sceptre. 3. He is authorized to appoint and settle the terms of the new covenant, and to draw up the articles of peace between God and man; it is God in Christ that reconciles the world, and to him he has given power to confer eternal life. The book of life is the Lamb's book; by his award we must stand or fall. 4. He is commissioned to carry on and complete the war with the powers of darkness; to cast out and give judgment against the prince of this world, ch. xii. 31. He is commissioned not only to judge, but to make war, Rev. xix. 11. All that will fight for God against Satan must enlist themselves under his banner. 5. He is constituted sole manager of the judgment of the great day. The ancients generally understood these words of that crowning act of his judicial power. The final and universal judgment is committed to the Son of man; the tribunal is his, it is the judgment-seat of Christ; the retinue is his, his mighty angels; he will try the causes, and pass the sentence. Acts xvii. 31.

Thirdly, He has given him authority to execute judgment also, v. 27. Observe, 1. What the authority is which our Redeemer is invested with: An authority to execute judgment; he has not only a legislative and judicial power, but an executive power too. The phrase here is used particularly for the judgment of condemnation, Jude 15. ποιῆσαι κρίσιμ—*to execute judgment* upon all; the same with his taking vengeance, 2 Thess. i. 8. The ruin of impenitent sinners comes from the hand of Christ; he that executes judgment upon them is the same that would have wrought salvation for them, which makes the sentence unexceptionable; and there is no relief against the sentence of the Redeemer; salvation itself cannot save those whom the Saviour

condemns, which makes the ruin remediless. 2 Whence he has that authority: The Father gave it to him. Christ's authority as Mediator is delegated and derived; he acts as the Father's Vicegerent, as the Lord's Anointed, the Lord's Christ. Now all this redounds very much to the honour of Christ, acquitting him from the guilt of blasphemy, in making himself equal with God; and very much to the comfort of all believers, who may with the greatest assurance venture their all in such hands.

[2.] Here are the reasons (reasons of state) for which this commission was given him. He has all judgment committed to him for two reasons:—

First, Because he is the Son of man; which denotes these three things:—1. His humiliation and gracious condescension. Man is a worm, the son of man a worm; yet this was the nature, this the character, which the Redeemer assumed, in pursuance of the counsels of love; to this low estate he stooped, and submitted to all the mortifications attending it, because it was his Father's will; in recompence therefore of this wonderful obedience, God did thus dignify him. Because he condescended to be the Son of man, his Father made him Lord of all, Phil. ii. 8, 9. 2. His affinity and alliance to us. The Father has committed the government of the children of men to him, because, being the Son of man, he is of the same nature with those whom he is set over, and therefore the more unexceptionable, and the more acceptable, as a Judge. Their governor shall proceed from the midst of them, Jer. xxx. 21. Of this that law was typical: One of thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee, Deut. xvii. 15. 3. His being the Messiah promised. In that famous vision of his kingdom and glory, Dan. vii. 13, 14, he is called the Son of man; and Ps. viii. 4—6 Thou hast made the Son of man have dominion over the works of thy hands. He is the Messiah, and therefore is invested with all this power. The Jews usually called the Christ the Son of David; but Christ usually called himself the Son of man, which was the more humble title, and bespeaks him a prince and Saviour, not to the Jewish nation only, but to the whole race of mankind.

Secondly, That all men should honour the Son, v. 23. The honouring of Jesus Christ is here spoken of as God's great design (the Son intended to glorify the Father, and therefore the Father intended to glorify the Son, ch. xii. 32); and as man's great duty, in compliance with that design. If God will have the Son honoured, it is the duty of all to whom he is made known to honour him. Observe here, 1. The respect that is to be paid to our Lord Jesus: We must honour the Son, must look upon him as one that is to be honoured both on account of his transcendent excellences and perfections in himself, and of the relations he stands in to us, and must study



to give him honour accordingly; must confess that he is Lord, and worship him; must honour him who was dishonoured for us.

2. The degree of it: *Even as they honour the Father.* This supposes it to be our duty to honour the Father; for revealed religion is founded on natural religion, and directs us to honour the Son, to honour him with divine honour; we must honour the Redeemer with the same honour with which we honour the Creator. So far was it from blasphemy for him to make himself equal with God that it is the highest injury that can be for us to make him otherwise. The truths and laws of the Christian religion, so far as they are revealed, are as sacred and honourable as those of natural religion, and to be equally had in estimation; for we lie under the same obligations to Christ, the Author of our well-being, that we lie under to the Author of our being; and have as necessary a dependence upon the Redeemer's grace as upon the Creator's providence, which is a sufficient ground for this law—to honour the Son as we honour the Father. To enforce this law, it is added, *He that honours not the Son honours not the Father* who has sent him. Some pretend a reverence for the Creator, and speak honourably of him, who make light of the Redeemer, and speak contemptibly of him; but let such know that the honours and interests of the Father and Son are so inseparably twisted and interwoven that the Father never reckons himself honoured by any that dishonour the Son. Note, (1.) Indignities done to the Lord Jesus reflect upon God himself, and will so be construed and reckoned for in the court of heaven. The Son having so far espoused the Father's honour as to take to himself the reproaches cast on him (Rom. xv. 3), the Father does no less espouse the Son's honour, and counts himself struck at through him. (2.) The reason of this is because the Son is sent and commissioned by the Father; it is the Father who hath sent him. Affronts to an ambassador are justly resented by the prince that sends him. And by this rule those who truly honour the Son honour the Father also; see Phil. ii. 11.

[3.] Here is the rule by which the Son goes in executing this commission, so those words seem to come in (v. 24): *He that heareth and believeth hath everlasting life.* Here we have the substance of the whole gospel; the preface commands attention to a thing most weighty, and assent to a thing most certain: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I, to whom you hear all judgment is committed, I, in whose lips is a divine sentence; take from me the Christian's character and charter.*"

First, The character of a Christian: *He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me.* To be a Christian indeed is, 1. To hear the word of Christ. It is not enough to be within hearing of it, but we must attend on it, as scholars on the instructions of their teachers; and attend to it, as servants to the

commands of their masters; we must hear and obey it, must abide by the gospel of Christ as the fixed rule of our faith and practice. 2. To believe on him that sent him; for Christ's design is to bring us to God; and, as he is the first original of all grace, so is he the last object of all faith. Christ is our way; God is our rest. We must believe on God as having sent Jesus Christ, and recommended himself to our faith and love, by manifesting his glory in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. iv. 6), as his Father and our Father.

Secondly, The charter of a Christian, in which all that are Christians indeed are interested. See what we get by Christ. 1. A charter of pardon: *He shall not come into condemnation.* The grace of the gospel is a full discharge from the curse of the law. A believer shall not only not lie under condemnation eternally, but shall not come into condemnation now, not come into the danger of it (Rom. viii. 1), not come into judgment, not be so much as arraigned. 2. A charter of privileges: He is passed out of death to life, is invested in a present happiness in spiritual life and entitled to a future happiness in eternal life. The tenour of the first covenant was, *Do this and live*; the man that doeth them shall live in them. Now this proves Christ equal with the Father that he has power to propose the same benefit to the hearers of his word that had been proposed to the keepers of the old law, that is, life: *Hear and live, believe and live*, is what we may venture our souls upon, when we are disabled to do and live; see ch. xvii. 2.

[4.] Here is the righteousness of his proceedings pursuant to this commission, v. 30. All judgment being committed to him, we cannot but ask how he manages it. And here he answers, *My judgment is just.* All Christ's acts of government, both legislative and judicial, are exactly agreeable to the rules of equity; see Prov. viii. 8. There can lie no exceptions against any of the determinations of the Redeemer; and therefore, as there shall be no repeal of any of his statutes, so there shall be no appeal from any of his sentences. His judgments are certainly just, for they are directed,

First, By the Father's wisdom: *I can of my ownself do nothing, nothing without the Father, but as I hear I judge*, as he had said before (v. 19), *The Son can do nothing but what he sees the Father do*; so here, nothing but what he hears the Father say: *As I hear*, 1. From the secret eternal counsels of the Father, so I judge. Would we know what we may depend upon in our dealing with God? *Hear the word of Christ.* We need not dive into the divine counsels, those secret things which belong not to us, but attend to the revealed dictates of Christ's government and judgment, which will furnish us with an unerring guide; for what Christ has adjudged is an exact copy or counterpart of

what the Father has decreed. 2. From the published records of the Old Testament. Christ, in all the execution of his undertaking, had an eye to the scripture, and made it his business to conform to this, and fulfil it: *As it was written in the volume of the book.* Thus he taught us to do *nothing of ourselves*, but, *as we hear from the word of God, so to judge* of things, and act accordingly.

*Secondly, By the Father's will: My judgment is just*, and cannot be otherwise, *because I seek not my own will, but his who sent me.* Not as if the will of Christ were contrary to the will of the Father, as the flesh is contrary to the spirit in us; but, 1. Christ had, as man, the natural and innocent affections of the human nature, *sense of pain and pleasure*, an inclination to life, an aversion to death: yet he *pleased not himself*, did not confer with these, nor consult these, when he was to go on his undertaking, but acquiesced entirely in the will of his Father. 2. What he did as Mediator was not the result of any *peculiar or particular* purpose and design of his own; what he did *seek* to do was not for his own mind's sake, but he was therein guided by his Father's will, and the purpose which he had *purposed to himself*. This our Saviour did upon all occasions *refer himself to* and govern himself by.

Thus our Lord Jesus has opened his commission (whether to the conviction of his enemies or no) to his own honour and the everlasting comfort of all his friends, who here see him *able to save to the uttermost*.

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. 32 There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. 33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. 34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. 35 He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. 36 But I have greater witness than *that* of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. 37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. 38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. 39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify

of me. 40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. 41 I receive not honour from men. 42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. 43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. 44 How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that *cometh* from God only? 45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust. 46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. 47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

In these verses our Lord Jesus proves and confirms the commission he had produced, and makes it out that he was sent of God to be the Messiah.

I. He *sets aside* his own testimony of himself (v. 31): "*If I bear witness of myself*, though it is infallibly true (ch. viii. 14), yet, according to the common rule of judgment among men, you will not admit it as *legal proof*, nor allow it to be *given in evidence*." Now, 1. This reflects reproach upon the sons of men, and their veracity and integrity. Surely we may say deliberately, what David said in haste, *All men are liars*, else it would never have been such a received maxim that a man's testimony of himself is suspicious, and not to be relied on; it is a sign that self-love is stronger than the love of truth. And yet, 2. It reflects honour on the Son of God, and bespeaks his wonderful condescension, that, though he is the *faithful witness*, the truth itself, who may challenge to be credited *upon his honour*, and his own single testimony, yet he is pleased to *waive his privilege*, and, for the confirmation of our faith, refers himself to his *ouchers*, that we may have full satisfaction.

II. He produces other witnesses that bear testimony to him that he was sent of God.

1. The Father himself bore testimony to him (v. 32): *There is another that beareth witness.* I take this to be meant of God the Father, for Christ mentions *his* testimony with his own (ch. viii. 18): *I bear witness of myself, and the Father beareth witness of me.* Observe,

(1.) The seal which the Father put to his commission: He *beareth witness of me*, not only has done so by a voice from heaven, but still does so by the tokens of his presence with me. See who they are to whom God will bear witness. [1.] Those whom he *sends and employs*; where he gives commissions he gives credentials. [2.] Those



who bear witness to him; so Christ did. God will own and honour those that own and honour him. [3.] Those who decline bearing witness of themselves; so Christ did. God will take care that those who humble and abase themselves, and seek not their own glory, shall not lose by it.

(2.) The satisfaction Christ had in this testimony: "*I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.* I am very well assured that I have a divine mission, and do not in the least hesitate concerning it; thus he had the witness in himself." The devil tempted him to question his being the Son of God, but he never yielded.

2. John Baptist witnessed to Christ, v. 33, &c. John came to bear witness of the light (ch. i. 7); his business was to prepare his way, and direct people to him: *Behold the Lamb of God.*

(1.) Now the testimony of John was, [1.] A solemn and public testimony: "You sent an embassy of priests and Levites to John, which gave him an opportunity of publishing what he had to say; it was not a popular, but a judicial testimony. [2.] It was a true testimony: *He bore witness to the truth*, as a witness ought to do, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Christ does not say, *He bore witness to me* (though every one knew he did), but, like an honest man, *He bore witness to the truth.* Now John was confessedly such a holy, good man, so mortified to the world, and so conversant with divine things, that it could not be imagined he should be guilty of such a forgery and imposture as to say what he did concerning Christ if it had not been so, and if he had not been sure of it.

(2.) Two things are added concerning John's testimony:—

[1.] That it was a testimony *ex abundantia*—more than he needed to vouch (v. 34): *I receive not testimony from man.* Though Christ saw fit to quote John's testimony, it was with a protestation that it shall not be deemed or construed so as to prejudice the prerogative of his self-sufficiency. Christ needs no letters of commendation, no testimonials or certificates, but what his own worth and excellency bring with him; why then did Christ here urge the testimony of John? Why, *these things I say, that you may be saved.* This he aimed at in all this discourse, to save not his own life, but the souls of others; he produced John's testimony because, being one of themselves, it was to be hoped that they would hearken to it. Note, First, Christ desires and designs the salvation even of his enemies and persecutors. Secondly, The word of Christ is the ordinary means of salvation. Thirdly, Christ in his word considers our infirmities and condescends to our capacities, consulting not so much what it befits so great a prince to say as what we can bear, and what will be most likely to do us good.

[2.] That it was a testimony *ad hominem*—to the man, because John Baptist was one whom they had a respect for (v. 35): *He was a light among you.* Observe,

First, The character of John Baptist: *He was a burning and a shining light.* Christ often spoke honourably of John; he was now in prison under a cloud, yet Christ gives him his due praise, which we must be ready to do to all that faithfully serve God. 1. He was a light, not φῶς—lux, light (so Christ was the light), but λύκνος—lucerna, a luminary, a derived subordinate light. His office was to enlighten a dark world with notices of the Messiah's approach, to whom he was as the morning star. 2. He was a burning light, which denotes sincerity; painted fire may be made to shine, but that which burns is true fire. It denotes also his activity, zeal, and fervency, burning in love to God and the souls of men; fire is always working on itself or something else, so is a good minister. 3. He was a shining light, which denotes either his exemplary conversation, in which our light should shine (Matt. v. 16), or an eminent diffusive influence. He was illustrious in the sight of others; though he affected obscurity and retirement, and was in the deserts, yet such were his doctrine, his baptism, his life, that he became very remarkable, and attracted the eyes of the nation.

Secondly, The affections of the people to him: *You were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.* 1. It was a transport that they were in, upon the appearing of John: "*You were willing—ἡθελήσατε, you delighted to rejoice in his light*; you were very proud that you had such a man among you, who was the honour of your country; you were willing ἀγαλλιασθῆναι—willing to dance, and make a noise about this light, as boys about a bonfire." 2. It was but transient, and soon over: "*You were fond of him, πρὸς ὥραν—for an hour, for a season, as little children are fond of a new thing; you were pleased with John awhile, but soon grew weary of him and his ministry, and said that he had a devil, and now you have him in prison.*" Note, Many, that seem to be affected and pleased with the gospel at first, afterwards despise and reject it; it is common for forward and noisy professors to cool and fall off. These here rejoiced in John's light, but never walked in it, and therefore did not keep to it; they were like the stony ground. While Herod was a friend to John Baptist, the people caressed him; but when he fell under Herod's frowns he lost their favours: "*You were willing to countenance John, πρὸς ὥραν, that is, for temporal ends*" (so some take it); "*you were glad of him, in hopes to make a tool of him, by his interest and under the shelter of his name to have shaken off the Roman yoke, and recovered the civil liberty and honour of your country.*" Now, (1.) Christ mentions their respect to John, to condemn them for their present opposition to himself, to whom

John bore witness. If they had continued their veneration for John, as they ought to have done, they would have embraced Christ. (2.) He mentions the passing away of their respect, to justify God in depriving them, as he had now done, of John's ministry, and putting that light under a bushel.

3. Christ's own works witnessed to him (v. 36): *I have a testimony greater than that of John; for if we believe the witness of men sent of God, as John was, the witness of God immediately, and not by the ministry of men, is greater, 1 John v. 9.* Observe, Though the witness of John was a less *cogent* and less *considerable* witness, yet our Lord was pleased to make use of it. We must be glad of all the supports that offer themselves for the confirmation of our faith, though they may not amount to a demonstration, and we must not *invalidate* any, under pretence that there are others more *conclusive*; we have occasion for them all. Now this greater testimony was that of the *works which his Father had given him to finish*. That is, (1.) In general the whole course of his life and ministry—his revealing God and his will to us, setting up his kingdom among men, reforming the world, destroying Satan's kingdom, restoring fallen man to his primitive purity and felicity, and shedding abroad in men's hearts the love of God and of one another—all that work of which he said when he died, *It is finished*, it was all, from first to last, *opus Deo dignum—a work worthy of God*; all he said and did was *holy* and *heavenly*, and a divine purity, power, and grace shone in it, proving abundantly that he was *sent of God*. (2.) In particular. The miracles he wrought for the proof of his divine mission witnessed of him. Now it is here said, [1.] That these works were *given him by the Father*, that is, he was both *appointed* and *empowered* to work them; for, as Mediator, he *derived* both commission and strength from his Father. [2.] They were given to him to *finish*; he must do all those works of wonder which the counsel and foreknowledge of God had before determined to be done; and his finishing them proves a divine power; for as *for God his work is perfect*. [3.] These works did *bear witness of him*, did prove that he was sent of God, and that what he said concerning himself was true; see Heb. ii. 4; Acts ii. 22. That the Father had sent him as a *Father*, not as a master sends his servant on an errand, but as a father sends his son to take possession for himself; if God had not sent him, he would not have *seconded* him, would not have *sealed* him, as he did by the works he gave him to do; for the world's Creator will never be its deceiver.

4. He produces, more fully than before, his Father's testimony concerning him (v. 37): *The Father that sent me hath borne witness of me*. The prince is not accustomed to follow his ambassador himself, to confirm his commission *viva voce—by speaking*; but God

was pleased to bear witness of his Son himself by a voice from heaven at his baptism (Matt. iii. 17): *This is my ambassador, This is my beloved Son*. The Jews reckoned *Bath-kol—the daughter of a voice*, a voice from heaven, one of the ways by which God made known his mind; and in that way he had owned Christ publicly and solemnly, and repeated it, Matt. xvii. 5. Note, (1.) Those whom God sends he will bear witness of; where he gives a commission, he will not fail to seal it; he that never *left himself without witness* (Acts xiv. 17) will never leave any of his servants so, who go upon his errand. (2.) Where God demands belief, he will not fail to give sufficient evidence, as he has done concerning Christ. That which was to be witnessed concerning Christ was chiefly this, that the God we had offended was willing to accept of him as a Mediator. Now concerning this he has *himself* given us full satisfaction (and he was fittest to do it), declaring himself well-pleased in him; if we be so, the work is done. Now, it might be suggested, if God himself thus bore witness of Christ, how came it to pass that he was not universally received by the Jewish nation and their rulers? To this Christ here answers that it was not to be thought strange, nor could their infidelity weaken his credibility, for two reasons:—[1.] Because they were not acquainted with such extraordinary revelations of God and his will: *You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape, or appearance*. They showed themselves to be as ignorant of God, though they professed relation to him, as we are of a man we never either saw or heard. "But why do I talk to you of God's bearing witness of me? He is one you know nothing of, nor have any acquaintance or communion with." Note, Ignorance of God is the true reason of men's rejecting the record he has given concerning his Son. A right understanding of *natural religion* would discover to us such admirable congruities in the *Christian* religion as would greatly dispose our minds to the entertainment of it. Some give this sense of it: "The Father bore witness of me by a *voice*, and the *descent of a dove*, which is such an extraordinary thing that you never saw or heard the like; and yet for my sake there was such a voice and appearance; yea, and you might have *heard that voice*, you might have *seen that appearance*, as others did, if you had closely attended the ministry of John, but by slighting it you missed of that testimony." [2.] Because they were not affected, no, not with the ordinary ways by which God had revealed himself to them: *You have not his word abiding in you, v. 38*. They had the scriptures of the Old Testament; might they not by them be disposed to receive Christ? Yes, if they had had their due influence upon them. But, *First*, The word of God was not in them; it was *among them*, in their country in their hands, but not *in them*, in their



hearts: not ruling in their souls, but only shining in their eyes and sounding in their ears. What did it avail them that they had the oracles of God committed to them (Rom. iii. 2), when they had not these oracles commanding in them? If they had, they would readily have embraced Christ. Secondly, It did not *abide*: Many have the word of God coming into them, and making some impressions for awhile, but it does not *abide* with them; it is not constantly in them, as a man at home, but only now and then, as a *wayfaring man*. If the word *abide* in us, if we converse with it by frequent meditation, consult with it upon every occasion, and conform to it in our conversation, we shall then readily receive the witness of the Father concerning Christ; see *ch. vii. 17*. But how did it appear that they *had not the word of God abiding in them*? It appeared by this, *Whom he hath sent, him ye believe not*. There was so much said in the Old Testament concerning Christ, to direct people when and where to look for him, and so to facilitate the discovery of him, that, if they had duly considered these things, they could not have avoided the conviction of Christ's being sent of God; so that their not believing in Christ was a certain sign that the word of God did not abide in them. Note, The in-dwelling of the word, and Spirit, and grace of God in us, is best tried by its effects, particularly by our *receiving what he sends*, the commands, the messengers, the providences he sends, especially Christ whom he hath sent.

5. The last witness he calls is the Old Testament, which witnessed of him, and to it he appeals (*v. 39, &c.*): *Search the scriptures, ἐπευνῶρε.*

(1.) This may be read, either, [1.] "You search the scriptures, and you do well to do so; you read them daily in your synagogues, you have rabbies, and doctors, and scribes, that make it their business to study them, and criticize upon them." The Jews boasted of the flourishing of scripture-learning in the days of Hillel, who died about twelve years after Christ's birth, and reckoned some of those who were then members of the sanhedrim the beauties of their wisdom and the glories of their law; and Christ owns that they did indeed search the scriptures, but it was in search of their own glory: "You search the scriptures, and therefore, if you were not wilfully blind, you would believe in me." Note, It is possible for men to be very studious in the letter of the scripture, and yet to be strangers to the power and influence of it. Or, [2.] As we read it: *Search the scriptures*; and so, *First*, It was spoken to them in the nature of an appeal: "You profess to receive and believe the scripture; here I will join issue with you, let this be the judge, provided you will not rest in the letter" (*herere in cortice*), "but will search into it." Note, when appeals are made to the scriptures, they must be searched. Search the whole book of scrip-

ture throughout, compare one passage with another, and explain one by another. We must likewise search particular passages to the bottom, and see not what they seem to say *prima facie*—at the first appearance, but what they say indeed. Secondly, It is spoken to us in the nature of an advice, or a command to all Christians to search the scriptures. Note, All those who would find Christ must search the scriptures; not only read them, and hear them, but search them, which denotes, 1. Diligence in seeking, labour, and study, and close application of mind. 2. Desire and design of finding. We must aim at some spiritual benefit and advantage in reading and studying the scripture, and often ask, "What am I now searching for?" We must search as for hidden treasures (Prov. ii. 4), as those that sink for gold or silver, or that dive for pearl, Job xxviii. 1—11. This ennobled the Bereans, Acts xvii. 11.

(2.) Now there are two things which we are here directed to have in our eye, in our searching the scripture: heaven our end, and Christ our way. [1.] We must search the scriptures for heaven as our great end: *For in them you think you have eternal life*. The scripture assures us of an eternal state set before us, and offers to us an eternal life in that state: it contains the chart that describes it, the charter that conveys it, the direction in the way that leads to it, and the foundation upon which the hope of it is built; and this is worth searching for where we are sure to find it. But to the Jews Christ saith only, *You think you have eternal life* in the scriptures, because, though they did retain the belief and hope of eternal life, and grounded their expectations of it upon the scriptures, yet herein they missed it, that they looked for it by the bare reading and studying of the scripture. It was a common but corrupt saying among them, *He that has the words of the law has eternal life*; they thought they were sure of heaven if they could say by heart, or rather by rote, such and such passages of scripture as they were directed to by the tradition of the elders; as they thought all the vulgar cursed because they did not thus know the law (*ch. vii. 49*), so they concluded all the learned undoubtedly blessed. [2.] We must search the scriptures for Christ, as the new and living way that leads to this end. These are they, the great and principal witnesses, that testify of me. Note, *First*, The scriptures, even those of the Old Testament, testify of Christ, and by them God bears witness to him. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets testified beforehand of him (1 Pet. i. 11), the purposes and promises of God concerning him, and the previous notices of him. The Jews knew very well that the Old Testament testified of the Messiah, and were critical in their remarks upon the passages that looked that way; and yet were careless, and wretchedly overseen, in the application of them. Secondly, Therefore we

must search the scriptures, and may hope to find eternal life in that search, because they testify of Christ; for this is *life eternal*, to know him; see 1 John v. 11. Christ is the treasure hid in the field of the scriptures, the water in those wells, the milk in those breasts.

(3.) To this testimony he annexes a reproof of their infidelity and wickedness in four instances; particularly,

[1.] Their neglect of him and his doctrine: "*You will not come to me, that you might have life*, v. 40. You search the scriptures, you believe the prophets, who you cannot but see testify of me; and yet you will not come to me, to whom they direct you." Their estrangement from Christ was the fault not so much of their *understandings* as of their *wills*. This is expressed as a complaint; Christ offered life, and it was not accepted. Note, *First*, There is *life* to be had with Jesus Christ for poor souls; we may have life, the life of *pardon and grace*, and *comfort and glory*: life is the perfection of our being, and inclusive of all happiness; and Christ is our life. *Secondly*, Those that would have this life must come to Jesus Christ for it; we may have it for the coming for. It *supposes* an assent of the understanding to the doctrine of Christ and the record given concerning him; it *lies in* the consent of the will to his government and grace, and it *produces* an answerable compliance in the affections and actions. *Thirdly*, The only reason why sinners die is because they *will not come* to Christ for life and happiness; it is not because they *cannot*, but because they *will not*. They will neither *accept* the life offered, because *spiritual and divine*, nor will they *agree* to the terms on which it is offered, nor *apply* themselves to the use of the appointed means: they will not be cured, for they will not observe the methods of cure. *Fourthly*, The wilfulness and obstinacy of sinners in rejecting the tenders of grace are a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and what he complains of. Those words (v. 41), *I receive not honour from men*, come in in a parenthesis, to obviate an objection against him, as if he sought his own glory, and made himself the head of a party, in obliging all to come to him, and applaud him. Note, 1. He did not *covet nor court* the applause of men, did not in the least affect that worldly pomp and splendour in which the carnal Jews expected their Messiah to appear. He charged those whom he cured not to make him known, and withdrew from those that would have made him king. 2. He had not the applause of men. Instead of receiving honour from men, he received a great deal of *dishonour* and *disgrace* from men, for he made himself of no reputation. 3. He *needed* not the applause of men; it was no addition to his glory whom all the angels of God worship, nor was he any otherwise pleased with it than as it was according to his Father's will, and for the happiness of

those who, in giving honour to him, received much greater honour from him

[2.] Their want of the love of God (v. 42): "*I know you very well, that you have not the love of God in you*. Why should I wonder that you do not come to me, when you want even the first principle of *natural religion*, which is the *love of God*?" Note, The reason why people *slight Christ* is because they do not *love God*; for, if we did indeed love God, we should love him who is his express image, and hasten to him by whom only we may be restored to the favour of God. He charged them (v. 37) with *ignorance* of God, and here with want of love to him; therefore men have not the love of God because they desire not the knowledge of him. Observe, *First*, The crime charged upon them: *You have not the love of God in you*. They pretended a great love to God, and thought they proved it by their zeal for the law, the temple, and the sabbath; and yet they were really without the love of God. Note, There are many who make a great profession of religion who yet show they want the love of God by their neglect of Christ and their contempt of his commandments; they hate his holiness and undervalue his goodness. Observe, It is the love of God *in us*, that love seated in the heart, a living active principle there, that God will *accept*; the love *shed abroad* there, Rom. v. 5. *Secondly*, The proof of this charge, by the personal knowledge of Christ, who *searches the heart* (Rev. ii. 23) and knows what is in man: *I know you*. Christ sees through all our disguises, and can say to each of us, *I know thee*. 1. Christ knows men better than their neighbours know them. The people thought that the scribes and Pharisees were very devout and good men, but Christ knew that they had not the love of God in them. 2. Christ knows men better than they know themselves. These Jews had a very good opinion of themselves, but Christ knew how corrupt their inside was, notwithstanding the speciousness of their outside; we may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive him. 3. Christ knows men who do not, and will not, know him; he looks on those who industriously look off from him, and calls by their own name, their true name, those who have not known him.

[3.] Another crime charged upon them is their readiness to entertain false Christs and false prophets, while they obstinately opposed him who was the true Messiah (v. 43). *I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive*. Be astonished, O heavens, at this (Jer. ii. 12, 13); for my people have committed two evils, great evils indeed. *First*, They have *forsaken the fountain of living waters*, for they would not receive Christ, who came in his Father's name, had his commission from his Father, and did all for his glory. *Secondly*, They have *hewn out broken cisterns*, they hearken



so every one that will set up in his own name. They forsake their own mercies, which is bad enough; and it is for *lying vanities*, which is worse. Observe here, 1. Those are false prophets who come in their own name, who run without being sent, and set up for themselves only. 2. It is just with God to suffer those to be deceived with false prophets who receive not the truth in the love of it. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. The errors of antichrist are the just punishment of those who obey not the doctrine of Christ. They that shut their eyes against the true light are by the judgment of God given up to wander endlessly after *false lights*, and to be led aside after every *ignis fatuus*. 3. It is the gross folly of many that, while they *nauseate* ancient truths, they are *fond* of upstart errors; they loathe manna, and at the same time *feed upon ashes*. After the Jews had rejected Christ and his gospel, they were continually haunted with spectres, with *false Christs* and *false prophets* (Matt. xxiv. 24), and their proneness to follow such occasioned those distractions and seditions that hastened their ruin.

[4.] They are here charged with pride and vain-glory, and unbelief, the effect of them, v. 44. Having sharply reproved their unbelief, like a wise physician, he here searches into the cause, lays the axe to the root. They *therefore* slighted and undervalued Christ because they *admired* and *overvalued* themselves. Here is,

*First*, Their ambition of worldly honour. Christ despised it, v. 41. They set their hearts upon it: *You receive honour one of another*; that is, "You look for a Messiah in outward pomp, and promise yourselves worldly honour by him." *You receive honour*:—1. "You desire to receive it, and aim at this in all you do." 2. "You give honour to others, and applaud them, only that they may return it, and may applaud you." *Petimus dabimusque vicissim—We ask and we bestow*. It is the proud man's art to throw honour upon others only that it may rebound upon himself. 3. "You are very careful to keep all the honours to yourselves, and confine them to your own party, as if you had the monopoly of that which is honourable." 4. "What respect is shown to you you *receive* yourselves, and do not transmit to God, as Herod." Idolizing men and their sentiments, and affecting to be idolized by them and their applauses, are pieces of idolatry as directly contrary to Christianity as any other.

*Secondly*, Their neglect of spiritual honour, called here *the honour that comes from God only*; this they sought not, nor minded. Note, 1. True honour is that which *comes from God only*, that is real and lasting honour; those are honourable indeed whom he takes into covenant and communion with himself. 2. *This honour have all the saints*. All that believe in Christ, through him receive the honour that comes from God. He

is not partial, but will give glory wherever he gives grace. 3. This honour that comes from God we must *seek*, must aim at it, and act for it, and take up with nothing short of it (Rom. ii. 29); we must account it *our reward*, as the Pharisees accounted the praise of men. 4. Those that will not come to Christ, and those that are ambitious of worldly honour, make it appear that they seek not the honour that comes from God, and it is their folly and ruin.

*Thirdly*, The influence this had upon their infidelity. *How can you believe* who are thus affected? Observe here, 1. The difficulty of believing arises from ourselves and our own corruption; we make our work hard to ourselves, and then complain it is impracticable. 2. The ambition and affectation of worldly honour are a great hindrance to faith in Christ. How can they believe who make the praise and applause of men their idol? When the profession and practice of serious godliness are unfashionable, are *every where spoken against*,—when Christ and his followers are men wondered at, and to be a Christian is to be like a *speckled bird* (and this is the common case),—how can they believe the summit of whose ambition is to *make a fair show in the flesh*?

6. The last witness here called is Moses, v. 45, &c. The Jews had a great veneration for Moses, and valued themselves upon their being the *disciples* of Moses, and pretended to adhere to Moses, in their opposition to Christ; but Christ here shows them,

(1.) That Moses was a witness against the unbelieving Jews, and *accused them to the Father*: *There is one that accuses you, even Moses*. This may be understood either, [1.] As showing the difference between the law and the gospel. Moses, that is, the law, *accuses you*, for by the law is the knowledge of sin; it *condemns* you, it is to those that trust to it a ministration of death and condemnation. But it is not the design of Christ's gospel to *accuse* us: *Think not that I will accuse you*. Christ did not come into the world as a *Momus*, to find fault and pick quarrels with every body, or as a *spy* upon the actions of men, or a *promoter*, to fish for crimes; no, he came to be an advocate, not an accuser; to reconcile God and man, and not to set them more at variance. What fools were they then that adhered to Moses against Christ, and *desired to be under the law*! Gal. iv. 21. Or, [2.] As showing the manifest unreasonableness of their infidelity: "Think not that I will appeal from your bar to God's and challenge you to answer there for what you do against me, as injured innocence usually does; no, I do not need; you are already accused, and cast, in the court of heaven; Moses himself says enough to convict you of, and condemn you for, your unbelief." Let them not mistake *concerning Christ*; though he was a prophet, he did not improve his interest in heaven against

those that persecuted him, did not, as Elias, *make intercession against Israel* (Rom vi. 2), nor as Jeremiah desire to see *God's vengeance on them*, Jer. xx. 12. Instead of *accusing* his crucifiers to his Father, he prayed, *Father, forgive them*. Nor let them mistake concerning Moses, as if he would stand by them in rejecting Christ; no, *There is one that accuses you, even Moses in whom you trust*. Note, *First*, External privileges and advantages are commonly the vain confidence of those who reject Christ and his grace. The Jews *trusted* in Moses, and thought their having his laws and ordinances would save them. *Secondly*, Those that confide in their privileges, and do not improve them, will find not only that their confidence is disappointed, but that those very privileges will be witnesses against them.

(2.) That Moses was a witness for Christ and to his doctrine (v. 46, 47): *He wrote of me*. Moses did particularly prophesy of Christ, as the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, the Shiloh, the great Prophet; the ceremonies of the law of Moses were *figures of him that was to come*. The Jews made Moses the patron of their opposition to Christ; but Christ here shows them their error, that Moses was so far from writing against Christ that he wrote *for him*, and *of him*. But, [1.] Christ here charges it on the Jews that they *did not believe Moses*. He had said (v. 45) that they *trusted* in Moses, and yet here he undertakes to make out that they did not believe Moses; they trusted to his name, but they did not receive his doctrine in its true sense and meaning; they did not rightly understand, nor give credit to, what there was in the writings of Moses concerning the Messiah. [2.] He proves this charge from their disbelief of him: *Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me*. Note, *First*, The surest trial of faith is by the effects it produces. Many say that they believe whose actions give their words the lie; for had they believed the scriptures they would have done otherwise than they did. *Secondly*, Those who rightly believe one part of scripture will receive every part. The prophecies of the Old Testament were so fully accomplished in Christ that those who rejected Christ did in effect deny those prophecies, and set them aside. [3.] From their disbelief of Moses he infers that it was not strange that they rejected him: *If you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?* How can it be thought that you should? *First*, "If you do not believe sacred writings, those oracles which are in black and white, which is the most certain way of conveyance, how shall you believe my words, words being usually less regarded?" *Secondly*, "If you do not believe Moses, for whom you have such a profound veneration, how is it likely that you should believe me, whom you look upon with so much contempt?" See Exod vi. 12. *Thirdly*, "If you

believe not what Moses spoke and wrote of me, which is a strong and cogent testimony for me, how shall you believe me and my mission?" If we admit not the premises, how shall we admit the conclusion? The truth of the Christian religion, it being a matter purely of divine revelation, depends upon the divine authority of the scripture; if therefore we believe not the divine inspiration of those writings, how shall we receive the doctrine of Christ?

Thus ends Christ's plea for himself, in answer to the charge exhibited against him. What effect it had we know not; it would seem to have had this, their *mouths* were *stopped* for the present, and they could not for shame but drop the prosecution, and yet their *hearts* were *hurdened*.

## CHAP. VI.

In this chapter we have, I. The miracle of the loaves, ver. 1-14. II. Christ's walking upon the water, ver. 15-21. III. The people's flocking after him to Capernaum, ver. 22-25. IV. His conference with them, occasioned by the miracle of the loaves, in which he reproves them for seeking carnal food, and directs them to spiritual food (ver. 26, 27), showing them how they must labour for spiritual food (ver. 28, 29), and what that spiritual food is, ver. 30-39. V. Their discontent at what he said, and the reproach he gave them for it, ver. 40-65. VI. The apostasy of many from him, and his discourse with his disciples that adhered to him upon that occasion, ver. 66-71.

**A**FTER these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. 2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. 3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. 5 When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? 10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the



fishes as much as they would. 12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. 13 Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. 14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

We have here an account of Christ's feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, which miracle is in *this* respect remarkable, that it is the only passage of the actions of *Christ's life* that is recorded by all the four evangelists. John, who does not usually relate what had been recorded by those who wrote before him, yet relates this, because of the reference the following discourse has to it. Observe,

I. The *place* and *time* where and when this miracle was wrought, which are noted for the greater evidence of the truth of the story; it is not said that it was done once upon a time, nobody knows where, but the circumstances are specified, that the fact might be enquired into.

1. The country that Christ was in (v. 1): *He went over the sea of Galilee*, called elsewhere *the lake of Gennesareth*, here *the sea of Tiberias*, from a city adjoining, which Herod had lately enlarged and beautified, and called so in honour of Tiberius the emperor, and probably had made his metropolis. Christ did not go directly over cross this inland sea, but made a *coasting* voyage to another place on the same side. It is not tempting God to choose to go *by water*, when there is convenience for it, even to those places whither we might go *by land*; for Christ never tempted the Lord his God, Matt. iv. 7.

2. The company that he was attended with: *A great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles*, v. 2. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus, while he went about *doing good*, lived continually in a *crowd*, which gave him more trouble than honour. Good and useful men must not complain of a *hurry* of business, when they are serving God and their generation; it will be time enough to *enjoy ourselves* when we come to that world where we shall *enjoy God*. (2.) Christ's miracles drew many *after him* that were not effectually drawn to him. They had their curiosity gratified by the strangeness of them, who had not their consciences convinced by the power of them.

3. Christ's posting himself advantageously to entertain them (v. 3): *He went up into a mountain*, and there he *sat with his disciples*,

that he might the more conveniently be seen and heard by the multitude that crowded after him; this was a *natural* pulpit, and not, like Ezra's, made *for the purpose*. Christ was now driven to be a *field preacher*; but his word was never the worse, nor the less acceptable, for that, to those who knew how to value it, who followed him still, not only when he *went out* to a desert place, but when he *went up* to a mountain, though *up-hill* be *against heart*. He *sat* there, as teachers do in *cathedra*—*in the chair of instruction*. He did not sit at ease, not sit in state, yet he sat as one having authority, sat ready to receive addresses that were made to him; whoever would might come, and find him there. He *sat with his disciples*; he condescended to take them to *sit with him*, to put a reputation upon them before the people, and give them an earnest of the glory in which they should shortly sit with him. We are said to *sit with him*, Eph. ii. 6.

4. The time when it was. The first words, *After those things*, do not signify that this immediately followed what was related in the foregoing chapter, for it was a considerable time after, and they signify no more than in process of time; but we are told (v. 4) that it was *when the passover was nigh*, which is here noted, (1.) Because, perhaps, that had brought in all the apostles from their respective expeditions, whither they were sent as itinerant preachers, that they might attend their Master to Jerusalem, to keep the feast. (2.) Because it was a custom with the Jews religiously to observe the approach of the passover *thirty days* before, with some sort of solemnity; so long before they had it in their eye, repaired the roads, mended bridges, if there was occasion, and discoursed of the passover and the institution of it. (3.) Because, perhaps, the approach of the passover, when every one knew Christ would go up to Jerusalem, and be absent for some time, made the multitude flock the more after him and attend the more diligently on him. Note, The prospect of losing our opportunities should quicken us to improve them with double diligence; and, when solemn ordinances are approaching, it is good to prepare for them by conversing with the word of Christ.

II. The miracle itself. And here observe,

1. The notice Christ took of the crowd that attended him (v. 5): *He lifted up his eyes*, and *saw a great company come to him*, poor, mean, ordinary people, no doubt, for such make up the multitudes, especially in such remote corners of the country; yet Christ showed himself pleased with their attendance, and concerned for their welfare, to teach us to *condescend to those of low estate*, and not to *set those with the dogs of our flock* whom Christ hath set with the lambs of his. The souls of the poor are as precious to Christ, and should be so to us, as those of the rich.

2. The enquiry he made concerning the way of providing for them. He directed himself to Philip, who had been his disciple from the first, and had seen all his miracles, and particularly that of his turning water into wine, and therefore it might be expected that he should have said, "Lord, if thou wilt, it is easy to thee to feed them all." Those that, like Israel, have been witnesses of Christ's works, and have shared in the benefit of them, are inexcusable if they say, *Can he furnish a table in the wilderness?* Philip was of Bethsaida, in the neighbourhood of which town Christ now was, and therefore he was most likely to help them to provision at the best hand; and probably much of the company was known to him, and he was concerned for them. Now Christ asked, *Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?* (1.) He takes it for granted that they must all *eat with him*. One would think that when he had taught and healed them he had done his part; and that now they should rather have been contriving how to treat him and his disciples, for some of the people were probably *rich*, and we are sure that Christ and his disciples were *poor*; yet he is solicitous to entertain them. Those that will accept Christ's spiritual gifts, instead of *paying* for them, shall be *paid* for their acceptance of them. Christ, having fed their souls with the bread of life, feeds their bodies also with *food convenient*, to show that the Lord is for the body, and to encourage us to pray for our daily bread, and to set us an example of compassion to the poor, James ii. 15, 16. (2.) His enquiry is, *Whence shall we buy bread?* One would think, considering his poverty, that he should rather have asked, *Where shall we have money to buy for them?* But he will rather lay out all he has than they shall want. He will buy to give, and we must *labour*, that we may give, Eph. iv. 28.

3. The design of this enquiry; it was only to try the faith of Philip, *for he himself knew what he would do*, v. 6. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus is never at a loss in his counsels; but, how difficult soever the case is, he knows what he has to do and what course he will take, Acts xv. 18. *He knows the thoughts he has towards his people* (Jer. xxix. 11) and is never at uncertainty; when we know not, he *himself knows what he will do*. (2.) When Christ is pleased to puzzle his people, it is only with a design to *prove* them. The question put Philip to a nonplus, yet Christ proposed it, to try whether he would say, "Lord, if thou wilt exert thy power for them, we need not buy bread."

4. Philip's answer to this question: "*Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient*, v. 7. Master, it is to no purpose to talk of buying bread for them, for neither will the country afford so much bread, nor can we afford to lay out so much money; ask Judas, who carries the bag." Two hundred pence or their money amount to about six pounds

of ours, and, if they lay out all that at once, it will exhaust their fund, and break them, and they must starve themselves. Grotius computes that *two hundred pennyworth of bread* would scarcely reach to *two thousand*, but Philip would go as near hand as he could, would have *every one to take a little*; and nature, we say, is content with a little. See the weakness of Philip's faith, that in this strait, as if the Master of the family had been an *ordinary person*, he looked for supply only in an *ordinary way*. Christ might now have said to him, as he did afterwards, *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* Or, as God to Moses in a like case, *Is the Lord's hand waxen short?* We are apt thus to distrust God's power when visible and ordinary means fail, that is, to trust him no further than we can see him.

5. The information which Christ received from another of his disciples concerning the provision they had. It was Andrew, here said to be *Simon Peter's brother*; though he was senior to Peter in discipleship, and instrumental to bring Peter to Christ, yet Peter afterwards so far outshone him that he is described by his relation to Peter: he acquainted Christ with what they had at hand; and in this we may see,

(1.) The *strength* of his love to those for whom he saw his Master concerned, in that he was willing to bring out all they had, though he knew not but they might want themselves, and any one would have said, *Charity begins at home*. He did not go about to conceal it, under pretence of being a better husband of their provision than the Master was, but honestly gives in an account of all they had. There is a lad here, *παιδάριον*—a little lad, probably one that used to follow this company, as suttlers do the camp, with provisions to sell, and the disciples had bespoken what he had for themselves; and it was *five barley-loaves*, and two small fishes. Here, [1.] The provision was *coarse and ordinary*; they were *barley loaves*. Canaan was a *land of wheat* (Deut. viii. 8); its inhabitants were commonly fed with the finest wheat (Ps. lxxxii. 16), the kidneys of wheat (Deut. xxxii. 14); yet Christ and his disciples were glad of *barley-bread*. It does not follow hence that we should tie ourselves to such coarse fare, and place religion in it (when God brings that which is finer to our hands, let us receive it, and be thankful); but it does follow that therefore we must not be *desirous of dainties* (Prov. xxiii. 3); nor murmur if we be reduced to coarse fare, but be content and thankful, and well reconciled to it; barley-bread is what Christ *had*, and better than we *deserve*. Nor let us despise the mean provision of the poor, nor look upon it with contempt, remembering how Christ was provided for. [2.] It was but *short and scanty*; there were but *five loaves*, and those so small that one little lad carried them all; and we find (2 Kings iv. 42, 43) that *twenty barley-loaves*,



with some other provision to help out, would not dine a hundred men without a miracle. There were but two fishes, and those small ones (*ὄψις ὀψάκια*), so small that one of them was but a morsel, *pisciculi assati*. I take the fish to have been *pickled*, or *soused*, for they had not fire to dress them with. The provision of *bread* was *little*, but that of *fish* was *less* in proportion to it, so that many a bit of dry bread they must eat before they could make a meal of this provision; but they were content with it. *Bread* is meat for our hunger; but of those that murmured for flesh it is said, *They asked meat for their lust*, Ps. lxxviii. 18. Well, Andrew was willing that the people should have this, as far as it would go. Note, A distrustful fear of wanting ourselves should not hinder us from needful charity to others.

(2.) See here the *weakness* of his *faith* in that word, "*But what are they among so many?*" To offer this to such a multitude is but to mock them." Philip and he had not that actual consideration of the power of Christ (of which they had had such large experience) which they should have had. Who fed the camp of Israel in the wilderness? He that could make *one man chase a thousand* could make one loaf feed a thousand.

6. The directions Christ gave the disciples to seat the guests (v. 10): "*Make the men sit down*, though you have nothing to set before them, and trust me for that." This was like *sending providence to market*, and going to buy without money: Christ would thus try their obedience. Observe, (1.) The furniture of the dining-room: *there was much grass in that place*, though a desert place; see how bountiful nature is, it *makes grass to grow upon the mountains*, Ps. cxlvii. 8. This grass was uneaten; God gives not only enough, but more than enough. Here was this plenty of grass where Christ was preaching; the gospel brings other blessings along with it: *Then shall the earth yield her increase*, Ps. lxxvii. 6. This plenty of grass made the place the more commodious for those that must sit on the ground, and served them for cushions, or *beds* (as they called what they sat on at meat, Esth. i. 6), and, considering what Christ says of the grass of the field (Matt. vi. 29, 30), these beds excelled those of Ahasuerus: nature's pomp is the most glorious. (2.) The number of the guests: *About five thousand*: a great entertainment, representing that of the gospel, which is *a feast for all nations* (Isa. xxv. 6), a feast for all comers.

7. The distribution of the provision, v. 11. Observe,

(1.) It was done with thanksgiving: *He gave thanks*. Note, [1.] We ought to give thanks to God for our food, for it is a mercy to have it, and we have it from the hand of God, and must *receive it with thanksgiving*, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. And this is the sweetness of our creature-comforts, that they will furnish us with *matter*, and give us occasion, for that

excellent duty of thanksgiving. [2.] Though our provision be coarse and scanty, though we have neither plenty nor dainty, yet we must give thanks to God for what we have.

(2.) It was distributed from the hand of Christ by the hands of his disciples, v. 11. Note, [1.] All our comforts come to us *originally* from the hand of Christ; whoever *brings* them, it is he that *sends* them, he distributes to those who distribute to us. [2.] In distributing the bread of life to those that follow him, he is pleased to make use of the ministration of his disciples; they are the servitors at Christ's table, or rather rulers in his household, to give to *every one his portion of meat in due season*.

(3.) It was done to universal satisfaction. They did not every one take a little, but all had *as much as they would*; not a short allowance, but a full meal; and considering how long they had fasted, with what an appetite they sat down, how agreeable this miraculous food may be supposed to have been, above common food, it was not a little that served them when they ate as much as they would and on free cost. Those whom Christ feeds with the bread of life he does not stint, Ps. lxxxi. 10. There were but *two small fishes*, and yet they had of them too *as much as they would*. He did not reserve them for the better sort of the guests, and put off the poor with dry bread, but treated them all alike, for they were all alike welcome. Those who call feeding upon fish *fasting* reproach the entertainment Christ here made, which was *a full feast*.

8. The care that was taken of the broken meat. (1.) The orders Christ gave concerning it (v. 12): *When they were filled*, and every man had within him a sensible witness to the truth of the miracle, Christ *said to the disciples*, the servants he employed, *Gather up the fragments*. Note, we must always take care that we make no waste of any of God's good creatures; for the grant we have of them, though large and full, is with this proviso, *wilful waste only excepted*. It is just with God to bring us to the want of that which we make waste of. The Jews were very careful not to lose any bread, nor let it fall to the ground, to be trodden upon. *Qui panem contemnit in gravem incidit paupertatem*—He who despises bread falls into the depths of poverty, was a saying among them. Though Christ could command supplies whenever he pleased, yet he would have the fragments gathered up. When we are filled we must remember that others want, and we may want. Those that would have wherewith to be *charitable* must be *provident*. Had this broken meat been left upon the grass, the beasts and fowls would have gathered it up; but that which is fit to be meat for men is wasted and lost if it be thrown to the brute-creatures. Christ did not order the broken meat to be gathered up till all were filled; we must not begin to hoard and lay up till all is laid out that ought to be,

for that is withholding more than is meet. Mr. Baxter notes here, "How much less should we lose God's word, or helps, or our time, or such greater mercies!" (2.) The observance of these orders (v. 13): *They filled twelve baskets with the fragments*, which was an evidence not only of the *truth* of the miracle, that they were fed, not with fancy, but with real food (witness those remains), but of the *greatness* of it; they were not only filled, but there was all this over and above. See how large the divine bounty is; it not only fills the cup, but makes it *run over*; bread enough, and to spare, in our Father's house. The fragments filled twelve baskets, one for each disciple; they were thus repaid with interest for their willingness to part with what they had for public service; see 2 Chron. xxxi. 10. The Jews lay it as a law upon themselves, when they have eaten a meal, to be sure to leave a piece of bread upon the table, upon which the blessing after meat may rest; for it is a curse upon the wicked man (Job xx. 21) that *there shall none of his meat be left*.

III. Here is the influence which this miracle had upon the people who tasted of the benefit of it (v. 14): *They said, This is of a truth that prophet*. Note, 1. Even the vulgar Jews with great assurance expected the Messiah to come into the world, and to be a *great prophet*. They speak here with assurance of his coming. The Pharisees despised them as *not knowing the law*; but, it should seem, they knew more of him that is the *end of the law* than the Pharisees did. 2. The miracles which Christ wrought did clearly demonstrate that he was the Messiah promised, a teacher come from God, the great prophet, and could not but convince the amazed spectators that this was he that should come. There were many who were convinced he was that prophet that should come into the world who yet did not cordially receive his doctrine, for they did not continue in it. Such a wretched incoherence and inconsistency there is between the faculties of the corrupt unsanctified soul, that it is possible for men to acknowledge that Christ is that prophet, and yet to turn a deaf ear to him.

15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. 16 And when even was *now* come, his disciples went down unto the sea, 17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. 18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. 19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh

unto the ship: and they were afraid. 20 But he saith unto them, *It is I; be not afraid*. 21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

Here is, I. Christ's retirement from the multitude.

1. Observe what induced him to retire; because he perceived that those who acknowledged him to be that prophet that should come into the world would come, and *take him by force, to make him a king*, v. 15. Now here we have an instance,

(1.) Of the irregular zeal of some of Christ's followers; nothing would serve but they would make him a king. Now, [1.] This was an *act of zeal* for the honour of Christ, and against the contempt which the ruling part of the Jewish church put upon him. They were concerned to see so great a benefactor to the world so little esteemed in it; and therefore, since royal titles are counted the most illustrious, they would make him a king, knowing that the Messiah was to be a king; and if a prophet, like Moses, then a sovereign prince and lawgiver, like him and, if they cannot set him up upon the *holy hill of Zion*, a mountain in Galilee shall serve for the present. Those whom Christ has feasted with the royal dainties of heaven should, in return for his favour, make him *their king*, and set him upon the throne in their souls: let him that has *fed us rule us*. But, [2.] It was an *irregular zeal*; for, *First*, It was grounded upon a mistake concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom, as if it were to be *of this world*, and he must appear with outward pomp, a crown on his head, and an army at his foot; such a king as this they would make him, which was as great a disparagement to his glory as it would be to lacker gold or paint a ruby. Right notions of Christ's kingdom would keep us to right methods for advancing it. *Secondly*, It was excited by the love of the flesh; they would make *him* their king who could feed them so plentifully without their toil, and save them from the curse of *eating their bread in the sweat of their face*. *Thirdly*, It was intended to carry on a *secular* design; they hoped this might be a fair opportunity of shaking off the Roman yoke, of which they were weary. If they had one to head them who could victual an army cheaper than another could provide for a family, they were sure of the sinews of the war, and could not fail of success, and the recovery of their ancient liberties. Thus is religion often prostituted to a secular interest, and Christ is served only to *serve a turn*, Rom. xvi. 18. *Vix quaritur Jesus propter Jesum, sed propter aliud—Jesus is usually sought after for something else, not for his own sake.*—Augustine. Nay, *Fourthly*, It was a tumultuous, seditious attempt, and a



disturbance of the public peace; it would make the country a seat of war, and expose it to the resentments of the Roman power. *Fifthly*, it was contrary to the mind of our Lord Jesus himself; for they would take him by force, whether he would or no. Note, Those who force honours upon Christ which he has not required at their hands displease him, and do him the greatest dishonour. Those that say *I am of Christ*, in opposition to those that are of Apollos and Cephas (so making Christ the head of a party), take him by force, to make him a king, contrary to his own mind.

(2.) Here is an instance of the humility and self-denial of the Lord Jesus, that, when they would have made him a king, he departed; so far was he from countenancing the design that he effectually quashed it. Herein he has left a testimony, [1.] Against ambition and affectation of worldly honour, to which he was perfectly mortified, and has taught us to be so. Had they come to take him by force and make him a prisoner, he could not have been more industrious to abscond than he was when they would make him a king. Let us not then covet to be the *idols of the crowd*, nor be *desirous of vain-glory*. [2.] Against faction and sedition, treason and rebellion, and whatever tends to disturb the peace of kings and provinces. By this it appears that he was no enemy to Cæsar, nor would have his followers be so, but the *quiet in the land*; that he would have his ministers decline every thing that looks like sedition, or looks towards it, and improve their interest only for their work's sake.

2. Observe *whither* he retired: *He departed again into a mountain*, εἰς τὸ ὄρος—into the mountain, the mountain where he had preached (v. 3), whence he came down into the plain, to feed the people, and then returned to it alone, to be private. Christ, though so useful in the places of concourse, yet chose sometimes to be alone, to teach us to sequester ourselves from the world now and then, for the more free converse with God and our own souls; and *never less alone*, says the serious Christian, *than when alone*. Public services must not jostle out private devotions.

II. Here is the disciples' distress at sea. *They that go down to the sea in ships, these see the works of the Lord, for he raiseth the stormy wind*, Ps. cvii. 23, 24. Apply this to these disciples.

1. Here is their *going down to the sea* in a ship (v. 16, 17): *When even was come*, and they had done their day's work, it was time to look homeward, and therefore they went aboard, and set sail for Capernaum. This they did by particular direction from their Master, with design (as it should seem) to get them out of the way of the temptation of countenancing those that would have made him a king.

2. Here is the *stormy wind* arising and

*fulfilling the word of God*. They were Christ's disciples, and were now in the way of their duty, and Christ was now in the mount praying for them; and yet they were in this distress. The perils and afflictions of this present time may very well consist with our interest in Christ and his intercession. They had lately been feasted at Christ's table; but after the sun-shine of comfort expect a storm. (1.) *It was now dark*; this made the storm the more dangerous and uncomfortable. Sometimes the people of God are in trouble, and cannot see their way out; in the dark concerning the cause of their trouble, concerning the design and tendency of it, and what the issue will be. (2.) *Jesus was not come to them*. When they were in that storm (Matt. viii. 23, &c.) *Jesus was with them*; but now their beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. The absence of Christ is the great aggravation of the troubles of Christians. (3.) *The sea arose by reason of a great wind*. It was calm and fair when they put to sea (they were not so presumptuous as to launch out in a storm), but it arose when they were *at sea*. In times of tranquillity we must prepare for trouble, for it may arise when we little think of it. Let it comfort good people, when they happen to be in storms at sea, that the disciples of Christ were so; and let the promises of a gracious God balance the threats of an angry sea. Though in a storm, and *in the dark*, they are no worse off than Christ's disciples were. Clouds and darkness sometimes surround the children of the light, and of the day.

3. Here is Christ's seasonable approach to them when they were in this peril, v. 19. *They had rowed* (being forced by the contrary winds to betake themselves to their oars) *about twenty-five or thirty furlongs*. The Holy Spirit that indicted this could have ascertained the number of furlongs precisely, but this, being only circumstantial, is left to be expressed according to the conjecture of the penman. And, when they were got off a good way at sea, they see *Jesus walking on the sea*. See here, (1.) The power Christ has over the laws and customs of nature, to control and dispense with them at his pleasure. It is natural for heavy bodies to sink in water, but Christ walked upon the water as upon dry land, which was more than Moses's dividing the water and walking through the water. (2.) The concern Christ has for his disciples in distress: *He drew nigh to the ship*; for therefore he walked upon the water, as he *rides upon the heavens, for the help of his people*, Deut. xxxiii. 26. He will not leave them comfortless when they seem to be *tossed with tempests and not comforted*. When they are banished (as John) into remote places, or shut up (as Paul and Silas) in close places, he will find access to them, and will be nigh them. (3.) The relief Christ gives to his disciples in their fears. They were afraid, more afraid of an apparition (for

so they supposed him to be) than of the winds and waves. It is more terrible to wrestle with the rulers of the darkness of this world than with a tempestuous sea. When they thought a demon haunted them, and perhaps was instrumental to raise the storm, they were more terrified than they had been while they saw nothing in it but what was natural. Note, [1.] Our real distresses are often much increased by our imaginary ones, the creatures of our own fancy. [2.] Even the approaches of comfort and deliverance are often so misconstrued as to become the occasions of fear and perplexity. We are often not only worse frightened than hurt, but then most frightened when we are ready to be helped. But, when they were in this fright, how affectionately did Christ silence their fears with that compassionate word (v. 20), *It is I, be not afraid!* Nothing is more powerful to convince sinners than that word, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest*; nothing more powerful to comfort saints than this, "*I am Jesus whom thou lovest*"; it is I that love thee, and seek thy good; be not afraid of me, nor of the storm." When trouble is nigh Christ is nigh.

4. Here is their speedy arrival at the port they were bound for, v. 17. (1.) They welcomed Christ into the ship; they willingly received him. Note, Christ's absenting himself for a time is but so much the more to endear himself, at his return, to his disciples, who value his presence above any thing; see Cant. iii. 4. (2.) Christ brought them safely to the shore: *Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.* Note, [1.] The ship of the church, in which the disciples of Christ have embarked themselves and their all, may be much shattered and distressed, yet it shall come safe to the harbour at last; tossed at sea, but not lost; cast down, but not destroyed; the bush burning, but not consumed. [2.] The power and presence of the church's King shall expedite and facilitate her deliverance, and conquer the difficulties which have baffled the skill and industry of all her other friends. The disciples had rowed hard, but could not make their point till they had got Christ in the ship, and then the work was done suddenly. If we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, have received him willingly, though the night be dark and the wind high, yet we may comfort ourselves with this, that we shall be at shore shortly, and are nearer to it than we think we are. Many a doubting soul is fetched to heaven by a pleasing surprise, or ever it is aware.

22 The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but *that* his disciples

were gone away alone; 23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks :) 24 When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. 25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? 26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

In these verses we have,

I. The careful enquiry which the people made after Christ, v. 23, 24. They saw the disciples go to sea; they saw Christ retire to the mountain, probably with an intimation that he desired to be private for some time; but, their hearts being set upon making him a king, they way-laid his return, and the day following, the hot fit of their zeal still continuing,

1. They were much at a loss for him. He was gone, and they knew not what was become of him. They saw there was no boat there but that in which the disciples went off, Providence so ordering it for the confirming of the miracle of his walking on the sea, for there was no boat for him to go in. They observed also that *Jesus did not go with his disciples*, but that they went off alone, and left him among them on their side of the water. Note, those that would find Christ must diligently observe all his motions, and learn to understand the tokens of his presence and absence, that they may steer accordingly.

2. They were very industrious in seeking him. They searched the places thereabouts, and when they saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples (neither he nor any one that could give tidings of him), they resolved to search elsewhere. Note, Those that would find Christ must accomplish a diligent search, must seek till they find, must go from sea to sea, to seek the word of God, rather than live without it; and those whom Christ has feasted with the bread of life should have their souls carried out in earnest desires towards him. Much would have more, in communion with Christ. Now, (1.) They resolved to go to Capernaum in quest of him. There were his head-quarters, where he



usually resided. Thither his disciples were gone; and they knew he would not be long absent from *them*. Those that would find Christ must go forth by the footsteps of the flock. (2.) Providence favoured them with an opportunity of going thither by sea, which was the speediest way; for there came *other boats from Tiberias*, which lay further off upon the same shore, *nigh*, though not so nigh to the place where they did *eat bread*, in which they might soon make a trip to Capernaum, and probably the boats were bound for that port. Note, Those that in sincerity seek Christ, and seek opportunities of converse with him, are commonly owned and assisted by Providence in those pursuits. The evangelist, having occasion to mention their eating the *multiplied bread*, adds, *After that the Lord had given thanks*, v. 11. So much were the disciples affected with their Master's giving thanks that they could never forget the impressions made upon them by it, but took a pleasure in remembering the gracious words that then proceeded out of his mouth. This was the grace and beauty of that meal, and made it remarkable; their hearts burned within them.

3. They laid hold of the opportunity that offered itself, and *they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus*. They did not defer, in hopes to see him again on *this side the water*; but their convictions being strong, and their desires warm, they followed him presently. Good motions are often crushed, and come to nothing, for want of being *prosecuted in time*. They came to Capernaum, and, for aught that appears, these unsound hypocritical followers of Christ had a *calm and pleasant* passage, while his sincere disciples had a *rough and stormy* one. It is not strange if it fare worst with the best men in this evil world. They came, *seeking Jesus*. Note, Those that would find Christ, and find comfort in him, must be willing to take pains, and, as here, to *compass* sea and land to seek and serve him who came from heaven to earth to seek and save us.

II. The success of this enquiry: *They found him on the other side of the sea*, v. 25. Note, Christ will be found of those that seek him, first or last; and it is worth while to cross a sea, nay, to go *from sea to sea*, and *from the river to the ends of the earth*, to seek Christ, if we may but find him at last. These people appeared afterwards to be unsound, and not actuated by any good principle, and yet were thus zealous. Note, Hypocrites may be very forward in their attendance on God's ordinances. If men have *no more* to show for their love to Christ than their running after sermons and prayers, and their pangs of affection to good preaching, they have reason to suspect themselves no better than this *eager crowd*. But though these people were no better principled, and Christ knew it, yet he was willing to be found of them, and admitted them into fellowship with

him. If we could know the hearts of hypocrites, yet, while their profession is plausible, we must not exclude them from our communion, much less when we do not know their hearts.

III. The question they put to him when they found him: *Rabbi, when camest thou hither?* It should seem by v. 59 that they found him *in the synagogue*. They knew this was the likeliest place to seek Christ in, for it was *his custom* to attend public assemblies for religious worship, Luke iv. 16. Note, Christ must be sought, and will be found, in the congregations of his people and in the administration of his ordinances; public worship is what Christ chooses to own and grace with his presence and the manifestations of himself. There they found him, and all they had to say to him was, *Rabbi, when camest thou hither?* They saw he would not be made a king, and therefore say no more of this, but call him Rabbi, their teacher. Their enquiry refers not only to the *time*, but to the *manner*, of his conveying himself thither; not only *When*, but, "*How*, camest thou hither?" for there was no boat for him to come in. They were curious in asking concerning Christ's motions, but not solicitous to observe their own.

IV. The answer Christ gave them, not direct to their question (what was it to them *when* and *how* he came thither?) but such an answer as their case required.

1. He discovers the *corrupt principle* they acted from in following him (v. 26): "*Verily, verily, I say unto you*, I that search the heart, and know what is in man, I the Amen, the faithful witness, Rev. iii. 14, 15. *You seek me*; that is well, but it is not from a good principle." Christ knows not only *what* we do, but *why* we do it. These followed Christ, (1.) Not for his doctrine's sake: *Not because you saw the miracles*. The miracles were the great confirmation of his doctrine; Nicodemus sought for him for the sake of them (ch. iii. 2), and argued from the power of his works to the truth of his word; but these were so stupid and mindless that they never considered this. But, (2.) It was for their own bellies' sake: *Because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled*; not because he taught them, but because he fed them. He had given them, [1.] *A full meal's meat: They did eat, and were filled*; and some of them perhaps were so poor that they had not known of a long time before now what it was to have enough, to eat and leave. [2.] *A dainty meal's meat*; it is probable that, as the miraculous wine was the best wine, so was the miraculous food more than usually pleasant. [3.] *A cheap meal's meat*, that cost them nothing; no reckoning was brought in. Note, Many follow Christ for *loaves*, and not for *love*. Thus those do who aim at secular advantage in their profession of religion, and follow it because by this craft they get their preferments. *Quanti profuit nobis hæc*

*fabula de Christo—This fable respecting Christ, what a gainful concern we have made of it!* said one of the popes. These people complimented Christ with Rabbi, and showed him great respect, yet he told them thus faithfully of their hypocrisy; his ministers must hence learn not to flatter those that flatter them, nor to be bribed by fair words to cry *peace* to all that cry *rabbi* to them, but to give faithful reproofs where there is cause for them.

2. He directs them to better principles (v. 27): *Labour for that meat which endures to everlasting life.* With the woman of Samaria he had discoursed of spiritual things under the similitude of *water*; here he speaks of them under the similitude of *meat*, taking occasion from the loaves they had eaten. His design is,

(1.) To moderate our worldly pursuits: *Labour not for the meat that perishes.* This does not forbid honest labour for food convenient, 2 Thess. iii. 12. But we must not make the things of this world our chief care and concern. Note, [1.] The things of the world are *meat that perishes*. Worldly wealth, honour, and pleasure, are *meat*; they feed the fancy (and many times this is all) and fill the belly. These are things which men hunger after as *meat*, and glut themselves with, and which a carnal heart, as long as they last, may make a shift to live upon; but they *perish*, are of a perishing nature, wither of themselves, and are exposed to a thousand accidents; those that have the largest share of them are not sure to have them while they live, but are sure to leave them and lose them when they die. [2.] It is therefore folly for us inordinately to labour after them. *First*, We must not labour in religion, nor work the works thereof, for this *perishing meat*, with an eye to this; we must not make our religion subservient to a worldly interest, nor aim at *secular advantages in sacred exercises*. *Secondly*, We must not at all labour for this *meat*; that is, we must not make these perishing things our *chief good*, nor make our care and pains about them our *chief business*; not seek those things *first* and *most*, Prov. xxiii. 4, 5.

(2.) To quicken and excite our gracious pursuits: "Bestow your pains to better purpose, and labour for that *meat* which belongs to the soul," of which he shows,

[1.] That it is *unspeakably desirable*: It is *meat which endures to everlasting life*; it is a happiness which will last as long as we must, which not only itself endures eternally, but will nourish us up to everlasting life. The blessings of the new covenant are our preparative for eternal life, our preservative to it, and the pledge and earnest of it.

[2.] It is *undoubtedly attainable*. Shall all the treasures of the world be ransacked, and all the fruits of the earth gathered together, to furnish us with provisions that will last to eternity? No, *The sea saith, It is not in me,*

among all the treasures hidden in the sand. *It cannot be gotten for gold*; but it is that which the Son of man shall give; ἢν δώσει, either which *meat*, or which *life*, the Son of man shall give. Observe here, *First*, Who gives this *meat*: the Son of man, the great householder and master of the stores, who is entrusted with the administration of the kingdom of God among men, and the dispensation of the gifts, graces, and comforts of that kingdom, and has power to give eternal life, with all the means of it and preparatives for it. We are told to labour for it, as if it were to be got by our own industry, and sold upon that valuable consideration, as the heathen said, *Dii laboribus omnia vendunt—The gods sell all advantages to the industrious*. But, when we have laboured ever so much for it, we have not merited it as our *hire*, but the Son of man gives it. And what more free than gift? It is an encouragement that he who has the giving of it is the Son of man, for then we may hope the sons of men that seek it, and labour for it, shall not fail to have it. *Secondly*, What authority he has to give it; for him has God the Father sealed, τοῦτον γὰρ ὁ Πατήρ ἱσχυράγισεν, ὁ θεός—for him the Father has sealed (proved and evidenced) to be God; so some read it; he has declared him to be the Son of God with power. He has sealed him, that is, has given him full authority to deal between God and man, as God's ambassador to man and man's intercessor with God, and has proved his commission by miracles. Having given him authority, he has given us assurance of it; having entrusted him with unlimited powers, he has satisfied us with undoubted proofs of them; so that as he might go on with confidence in his undertaking for us, so may we in our resignations to him. God the Father sealed him with the Spirit that rested on him, by the voice from heaven, by the testimony he bore to him in signs and wonders. Divine revelation is perfected in him, in him the vision and prophecy is sealed up (Dan. ix. 24), to him all believers seal that he is true (ch. iii. 33), and in him they are all sealed, 2 Cor. i. 22.

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. 30 They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? 31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that



bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. 34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. 36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. 37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. 41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. 42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? 43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. 47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. 48 I am that bread of life. 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven:

if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. 52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat? 53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. 59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

Whether this conference was with the Capernautes, in whose synagogue Christ now was, or with those who came from the other side of the sea, is not certain nor material; however, it is an instance of Christ's condescension that he gave them leave to ask him questions, and did not resent the interruption as an affront, no, not from his common hearers, though not his immediate followers. Those that would be apt to teach must be swift to hear, and study to answer. It is the wisdom of teachers, when they are asked even impertinent unprofitable questions, thence to take occasion to answer in that which is profitable, that the question may be rejected, but not the request. Now,

1. Christ having told them that *they* must *work for the meat* he spoke of, must *labour* for it, they enquire what work they must do, and he answers them, *v. 28, 29.* 1. Their enquiry was *pertinent* enough (*v. 28*): *What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?* Some understand it as a pert question "What works of God can we do more and better than those we do in obedience to the law of Moses?" But I rather take it as a humble serious question, showing them to be, at least for the present, in a good mind, and willing to know and do their duty; and I imagine that those who asked this question, How and What (*v. 30*), and made the request (*v. 34*), were not the same persons with those that murmured (*v. 41, 42*), and strove (*v. 52*),

for those are expressly called *the Jews*, who came out of Judea (for those were strictly called Jews) to cavil, whereas these were of Galilee, and came to be taught. This question here intimates that they were convinced that those who would obtain this everlasting meat, (1.) Must aim to do something great. Those who *look high* in their expectations, and hope to enjoy the *glory of God*, must aim *high* in those endeavours, and study to *do the works of God*, works which he requires and will accept, *works of God*, distinguished from the works of worldly men in their worldly pursuits. It is not enough to speak the words of God, but we must do the works of God. (2.) Must be willing to do any thing: *What shall we do?* Lord, I am ready to do whatever thou shalt appoint, though ever so displeasing to flesh and blood, Acts ix. 6.

2. Christ's answer was plain enough (v. 29): *This is the work of God that ye believe.* Note, (1.) The work of faith is the work of God. They enquire after the *works of God* (in the plural number), being careful about *many things*; but Christ directs them to one work, which includes all, the one thing needful: that *you believe*, which supersedes all the works of the ceremonial law; the work which is necessary to the acceptance of all the other works, and which produces them, for without faith you cannot please God. It is *God's work*, for it is of his *working in us*, it subjects the soul to his working on us, and quickens the soul in working *for him*. (2.) That faith is the work of God which closes with Christ, and relies upon him. It is to *believe on him* as one whom God *hath sent*, as God's commissioner in the great affair of peace between God and man, and as such to rest upon him, and *resign ourselves* to him. See *ch. xiv. 1.*

II. Christ having told them that the *Son of man* would *give them this meat*, they enquire concerning him, and he answers their enquiry.

1. Their enquiry is after a *sign* (v. 30): *What sign showest thou?* Thus far they were right, that, since he required them to give him *credit*, he should produce his *credentials*, and make it out by miracle that he was *sent of God*. Moses having confirmed his mission by *signs*, it was requisite that Christ, who came to set aside the ceremonial law, should in like manner confirm his: "*What dost thou work?*" What dost thou drive at? What lasting characters of a divine power dost thou design to leave upon thy doctrine?" But *herein* they missed it,

(1.) That they overlooked the many miracles which they had seen wrought by him, and which amounted to an abundant proof of his divine mission. Is this a time of day to ask, "What sign showest thou?" especially at Capernaum, the *staple* of miracles, where he had done so *many mighty works*, *signs* so significant of his office and undertaking? Were not these very persons but the other

day miraculously fed by him? None so blind as they that will not see; for they may be so blind as to question whether it be day or no, when the sun shines in their faces.

(2.) That they preferred the miraculous feeding of Israel in the wilderness before all the miracles Christ wrought (v. 31): *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert*; and, to strengthen the objection, they quote a scripture for it: *He gave them bread from heaven* (taken from Ps. lxxviii. 24), *he gave them of the corn of heaven*. What a good use might be made of this story to which they here refer! It was a memorable instance of God's power and goodness, often mentioned to the glory of God (Neh. xix. 20, 21), yet see how these people perverted it, and made an ill use of it. [1.] Christ reproved them for their fondness of the miraculous bread, and bade them not set their hearts upon *meat which perisheth*; "Why," say they, "*meat for the belly* was the great good thing that God gave to our fathers in the desert; and why should not we then labour for that meat? If God made much of them, why should not we be for those that will make much of us?" [2.] Christ had fed five thousand men with five loaves, and had given them that as one sign to prove him *sent of God*; but, under colour of *magnifying* the miracles of Moses, they tacitly *undervalue* this miracle of Christ, and *evade* the evidence of it. "Christ fed his thousands; but Moses his hundreds of thousands; Christ fed them but once, and then reproved those who followed him in hope to be still fed, and put them off with a discourse of spiritual food; but Moses fed his followers forty years, and miracles were not their rarities, but their daily bread: Christ fed them with bread out of *the earth*, barley-bread, and fishes out of *the sea*; but Moses fed Israel with bread from heaven, angel's food." Thus big did these Jews talk of the *manna* which *their fathers did eat*; but their fathers had slighted it as much as they did now the barley-loaves, and called it *light bread*, Num. xxi. 5. Thus apt are we to slight and overlook the appearances of God's power and grace in our own times, while we pretend to admire the wonders of which *our fathers told us*. Suppose *this* miracle of Christ was outdone by that of Moses, yet there were other instances in which Christ's miracles outshone his; and, besides, all true miracles prove a divine doctrine, though not equally illustrious in the circumstances, which were ever *diversified* according as the occasion did require. As much as the manna excelled the barley-loaves, so much, and much more, did the doctrine of Christ excel the law of Moses, and his heavenly institutions the carnal ordinances of that dispensation.

2. Here is Christ's reply to this enquiry, wherein,

(1.) He *rectifies* their *mistake* concerning the *typical* manna. It was true that their fathers did eat *manna* in the desert. But,



[1.] It was not Moses that gave it to them, nor were they obliged to him for it; he was but the instrument, and therefore they must look beyond him to God. We do not find that Moses did so much as pray to God for the *manna*; and he spoke unadvisedly when he said, *Must we fetch water out of the rock?* Moses gave them not either *that* bread or *that* water. [2.] It was not given them, as they imagined, *from heaven*, from the highest heavens, but only from *the clouds*, and therefore not so much superior to that which had its rise from the earth as they thought. Because the scripture saith, *He gave them bread from heaven*, it does not follow that it was *heavenly bread*, or was intended to be the nourishment of souls. Misunderstanding scripture language occasions many mistakes in the things of God.

(2.) He *informs* them concerning the *true manna*, of which that was a type: *But my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven*; that which is truly and properly the *bread from heaven*, of which the manna was but a shadow and figure, is *now given*, not to *your fathers*, who are dead and gone, but to *you* of this present age, for whom the *better things were reserved*: he is *now giving* you that *bread from heaven*, which is *truly* so called. As much as the throne of God's glory is above the clouds of the air, so much does the *spiritual bread* of the everlasting gospel excel the *manna*. In calling God *his Father*, he proclaims himself greater than Moses; for Moses was faithful but as a servant, Christ as a *Son*, Heb. iii. 5, 6.

III. Christ, having replied to their enquiries, takes further occasion from their objection concerning the *manna* to discourse of *himself* under the similitude of *bread*, and of *believing* under the similitude of *eating and drinking*; to which, together with his putting both together in the *eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood*, and with the remarks made upon it by the hearers, the rest of this conference may be reduced.

1. Christ having spoken of *himself* as the great *gift of God*, and the *true bread* (v. 32), largely *explains* and *confirms* this, that we may rightly know him.

(1.) He here shows that he is the *true bread*; this he repeats again and again, v. 33, 35, 48—51. Observe, [1.] That Christ is *bread*, is that to the soul which bread is to the body, nourishes and supports the spiritual life (is the staff of it) as bread does the bodily life; *it is the staff of life*. The doctrines of the gospel concerning Christ—that he is the Mediator between God and man, that he is our peace, our righteousness, our Redeemer; *by these things do men live*. Our bodies could better live without food than our souls without Christ. *Bread-corn* is *bruised* (Isa. xxviii. 28), so was Christ; he was born at Bethlehem, the *house of bread*, and typified by the *show-bread*. [2.] That he is the *bread of God* (v. 33), divine bread; it is he that is of *God* (v. 46), bread which

my Father gives (v. 32), which he has made to be the food of our souls; the bread of God's family, his *children's bread*. The Levitical sacrifices are called the *bread of God* (Lev. xxi. 21, 22), and Christ is the great sacrifice; Christ, in his word and ordinances, the *feast* upon the sacrifice. [3.] That he is the *bread of life* (v. 35, and again, v. 48), *that* bread of life, alluding to the tree of life in the midst of the garden of Eden, which was to Adam the seal of that part of the covenant, *Do this and live*, of which he might *eat and live*. Christ is the bread of life, for he is the fruit of the *tree of life*. First, He is the *living bread* (so he explains himself, v. 51): *I am the living bread*. Bread is itself a dead thing, and nourishes not but by the help of the faculties of a living body; but Christ is himself *living bread*, and nourishes by his own power. Manna was a dead thing; if kept but one night, it putrefied and bred worms; but Christ is ever living, everlasting bread, that never moulds, nor waxes old. The doctrine of Christ crucified is now as strengthening and comforting to a believer as ever it was, and his mediation still of as much value and efficacy as ever. Secondly, *He gives life unto the world* (v. 33), spiritual and eternal life; the life of the soul in union and communion with God here, and in the vision and fruition of him hereafter; a life that includes in it all happiness. The *manna* did only preserve and support life, did not preserve and perpetuate life, much less restore it; but Christ *gives* life to those that were dead in sin. The manna was ordained only for the life of the Israelites, but Christ is given for the *life of the world*; none are excluded from the benefit of this bread, but such as exclude themselves. Christ came to *put life* into the minds of men, principles productive of acceptable performances. [4.] That he is the *bread which came down from heaven*; this is often repeated here, v. 33, 50, 51, 58. This denotes, First, The divinity of Christ's person. As God, he had a being in heaven, whence he came to take our nature upon him: *I came down from heaven*, whence we may infer his *antiquity*, he was in the beginning with God; his *ability*, for heaven is the firmament of power; and his *authority*, he came with a divine commission. Secondly, The divine original of all that good which flows to us through him. He *comes*, not only *καταβὰς*—that came down (v. 51), but *καταβάνων*—that comes down; he is descending, denoting a constant communication of light, life, and love, from God to believers through Christ, as the *manna* descended daily; see Eph. i. 3. *Omnia desuper*—All things from above. [5.] That he is *that bread* of which the *manna* was a type and figure (v. 58), *that* bread, the true bread, v. 32. As the rock that they drank of was Christ, so was the manna they ate of *spiritual bread*, 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. Manna was given to Israel; so Christ to the spiritual Israel. There was *manna*



enough for them all; so in Christ a fulness of grace for all believers; he that *gathers much* of this *manna* will have none to spare when he comes to use it; and he that gathers little, when his grace comes to be perfected in glory, shall find that *he has no lack*. *Manna* was to be gathered in the morning; and those that would find Christ must *seek him early*. *Manna* was sweet, and, as the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* tells us (Wisd. xvi. 20), was agreeable to every palate; and to those that believe Christ is *precious*. Israel lived upon *manna* till they came to Canaan; and Christ is our life. There was a memorial of the *manna* preserved in the ark; so of Christ in the Lord's supper, as the food of souls.

(2.) He here shows what his undertaking was, and what his errand into the world. Laying aside the metaphor, he speaks plainly, and speaks no proverb, giving us an account of his business among men, v. 38—40.

[1.] He assures us, in general, that he came from heaven upon his Father's business (v. 38), not to *do his own will, but the will of him that sent him*. He came from heaven, which bespeaks him an intelligent active being, who voluntarily descended to this lower world, a long journey, and a great step downward, considering the glories of the world he came from and the calamities of the world he came to; we may well ask with wonder, "What moved him to such an expedition?" Here he tells us that he came to do, not *his own will*, but the will of his Father; not that he had any will that stood in competition with the will of his Father, but those to whom he spoke suspected he might. "No," saith he, "my own will is not the spring I act from, nor the rule I go by, but I am come to *do the will of him that sent me*." That is, *First*, Christ did not come into the world as a *private* person, that acts for himself only, but under a *public character*, to act for others as an ambassador, or plenipotentiary, authorized by a public commission; he came into the world as God's great agent and the world's great physician. It was not any private business that brought him hither, but he came to settle affairs between parties no less considerable than the great Creator and the whole creation. *Secondly*, Christ, when he was in the world, did not carry on any *private* design, nor had any *separate interest* at all, distinct from theirs for whom he acted. The scope of his whole life was to glorify God and do good to men. He therefore never consulted his own ease, safety, or quiet; but, when he was to lay down his life, though he had a human nature which started at it, he set aside the consideration of that, and resolved his will as man into the will of God: *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*.

[2.] He acquaints us, in particular, with that will of the Father which he came to do; he here *declares the decree*, the instructions he was to pursue.

*First*, The *private instructions* given to Christ, that he should be sure to save all the chosen remnant; and this is the *covenant of redemption* between the Father and the Son (v. 38): *This is the Father's will, who hath sent me*; this is the charge I am entrusted with, that *of all whom he hath given me I should lose none*." Note, 1. There is a certain number of the children of men *given* by the Father to Jesus Christ, to be his care, and so to be to him for a name and a praise; given him for an *inheritance*, for a possession. Let him do all that for them which their case requires; teach them, and heal them, pay their debt, and plead their cause, prepare them for, and preserve them to, eternal life, and then let him make his best of them. The Father might dispose of them as he pleased: as creatures, their lives and beings were *derived* from him; as sinners, their lives and beings were *forfeited* to him. He might have sold them for the satisfaction of his justice, and delivered them to the tormentors; but he pitched upon them to be the monuments of his mercy, and delivered them to the Saviour. Those whom God chose to be the objects of his special love he lodged as a trust in the hands of Christ. 2. Jesus Christ has undertaken that he will *lose none* of those that were thus *given* him of the Father. The *many sons* whom he was to *bring to glory* shall all be forth-coming, and none of them missing, Matt. xviii. 14. None of them shall be lost for want of a sufficient price to purchase them or sufficient grace to sanctify them. *If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever*, Gen. xliii. 9. 3. Christ's undertaking for those that are given him extends to the resurrection of their bodies. *I will raise it up again at the last day*, which supposes all that goes before, but this is to crown and complete the undertaking. The body is a part of the man, and therefore a part of Christ's purchase and charge; it pertains to the promises, and therefore it shall not be *lost*. The undertaking is not only that he shall *lose none*, no person, but that he shall *lose nothing*, no part of the person, and therefore not the body. Christ's undertaking will never be accomplished till the resurrection, when the souls and bodies of the saints shall be re-united and gathered to Christ, that he may present them to the Father: *Behold I, and the children that thou hast given me*, Heb. ii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 12. 4. The spring and original of all this is the *sovereign will of God*, the counsels of his will, according to which he works all this. This was the commandment he gave to his Son, when he sent him into the world, and to which the Son always had an eye.

*Secondly*, The *public instructions* which were to be given to the children of men, in what way, and upon what terms, they might obtain salvation by Christ; and this is the *covenant of grace* between God and man. Who the particular persons were that were



given to Christ is a *secret*: *The Lord knows them that are his*, we do not, nor is it fit we should; but, though their names are concealed, their characters are published. An offer is made of life and happiness upon gospel terms, that by it those that were given to Christ might be brought to him, and others left inexcusable (v. 40): "*This is the will, the revealed will, of him that sent me, the method agreed upon, upon which to proceed with the children of men, that every one, Jew or Gentile, that sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up.*" This is *gospel* indeed, good news. Is it not reviving to hear this?

1. That *eternal life* may be had, if it be not our own fault; that whereas, upon the sin of the first Adam, the *way of the tree of life* was blocked up, by the grace of the second Adam it is laid open again. The crown of glory is set before us as the prize of our high calling, which we may run for and obtain. 2. Every one may have it. This gospel is to be preached, this offer made, to all, and none can say, "It belongs not to me," Rev. xxii. 17. 3. This everlasting life is sure to all those who believe in Christ, and to them only. He that *sees the Son*, and *believes on him*, shall be saved. Some understand this *seeing* as a *limitation* of this condition of salvation to those only that have the revelation of Christ and his grace made to them. Every one that has the opportunity of being acquainted with Christ, and improves this so well as to *believe* in him, shall have everlasting life, so that none shall be condemned for unbelief (however they may be for other sins) but those who have had the gospel preached to them, who, like these Jews here (v. 36), have *seen*, and yet have *not* believed; have known Christ, and yet not trusted in him. But I rather understand *seeing* here to mean the same thing with *believing*, for it is *θεωρῶν*, which signifies not so much the sight of the eye (as v. 36, *ὡπακάρε με—ye have seen me*) as the *contemplation of the mind*. Every one that *sees the Son*, that is, *believes on him*, sees him with an eye of faith, by which we come to be duly acquainted and affected with the doctrine of the gospel concerning him. It is to look upon him, as the stung Israelites upon the brazen serpent. It is not a *blind* faith that Christ requires, that we should be willing to have our *eyes put out*, and then follow him, but that we should *see him*, and see what ground we go upon in our faith. It is *then* right when it is not taken up upon *hearsay* (believing as the church believes), but is the result of a due consideration of, and insight into, the motives of credibility: *Now mine eye sees thee. We have heard him ourselves* - 4. Those who believe in Jesus Christ, in order to their having everlasting life, shall be raised up by his power at the last day. He had it in charge as his Father's will (v. 39), and here he solemnly makes it his own undertaking: *I will raise him up*, which

signifies not only the return of the body to life, but the putting of the *whole man* into a full possession of the eternal life promised.

2. Now Christ discoursing thus concerning himself, as the *bread of life* that came down from heaven, let us see what remarks his hearers made upon it.

(1.) When they heard of such a thing as the *bread of God*, which *gives life*, they heartily prayed for it (v. 34): *Lord, evermore give us this bread*. I cannot think that this is spoken scoffingly, and in a way of derision, as most interpreters understand it: "Give us such bread as this, if thou canst; let us be fed with it, not for one meal, as with the five loaves, but *evermore*;" as if this were no better a prayer than that of the impenitent thief: *If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us*. But I take this request to be made, though ignorantly, yet honestly, and to be well meant; for they call him *Lord*, and desire a share in what he *gives*, whatever he means by it. General and confused notions of divine things produce in carnal hearts some kind of desires towards them, and wishes of them; like Balaam's wish, to die the *death of the righteous*. Those who have an indistinct knowledge of the things of God, who see men as trees walking, make, as I may call them, *inarticulate* prayers for spiritual blessings. They think the favour of God a *good thing*, and heaven a *fine place*, and cannot but wish them their own, while they have no value nor desire at all for that holiness which is necessary both to the one and to the other. Let this be the desire of our souls; have we tasted that the Lord is gracious, been feasted with the word of God, and Christ in the word? let us say, "*Lord, evermore give us this bread*;" let the bread of life be our daily bread, the heavenly manna our continual feast, and let us never know the want of it."

(2.) But, when they understood that by this *bread of life* Jesus meant *himself*, then they *despised* it. Whether they were the same persons that had prayed for it (v. 34), or some others of the company, does not appear; it seems to be some others, for they are called *Jews*. Now it is said (v. 41), *They murmured at him*. This comes in immediately after that solemn declaration which Christ had made of God's will and his own undertaking concerning man's salvation (v. 39, 40), which certainly were some of the most weighty and gracious words that ever proceeded out of the mouth of our Lord Jesus, the most faithful, and best worthy of all acceptance. One would think that, like Israel in Egypt, when they heard that God had thus *visited* them, they should have *bowed their heads and worshipped*; but on the contrary, instead of closing with the offer made them, they *murmured*, quarrelled with what Christ said, and, though they did not openly oppose and contradict it, yet they privately whispered among themselves in contempt of it, and instilled into one another's minds prejudices

against it. Many that will not professedly contradict the doctrine of Christ (their cavils are so weak and groundless that they are either ashamed to own them or afraid to have them silenced), yet say in their hearts that they *do not like it*. Now, [1.] That which offended them was Christ's asserting his origin to be *from heaven*, v. 41, 42. How is it that he saith, *I came down from heaven*? They had heard of angels coming down from heaven, but never of a man, overlooking the proofs he had given them of his being more than a man. [2.] That which they thought justified them herein was that they knew his extraction on earth: *Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know*? They took it amiss that he should say that he came down from heaven, when he was *one of them*. They speak slightly of his blessed name, *Jesus*: *Is not this Jesus*. They take it for granted that Joseph was really his father, though he was only *reputed* to be so. Note, Mistakes concerning the person of Christ, as if he were a mere man, conceived and born by ordinary generation, occasion the offence that is taken at his doctrine and offices. Those who set him on a level with the other sons of men, whose father and mother we know, no wonder if they derogate from the honour of his satisfaction and the mysteries of his undertaking, and, like the Jews here, murmur at his promise to *raise us up at the last day*.

3. Christ, having spoken of faith as the great work of God (v. 29), discourses largely concerning this work, instructing and encouraging us in it.

(1.) He shows what it is to *believe in Christ*.

[1.] To believe in Christ is to *come to Christ*. He that *comes to me* is the same with him that *believes in me* (v. 35), and again (v. 37): *He that comes unto me*; so v. 44, 45. Repentance towards God is *coming to him* (Jer. iii. 22) as our chief good and highest end; and so faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ is coming to him as our prince and Saviour, and our way to the Father. It denotes the out-goings of our affection towards him, for these are the motions of the soul, and actions agreeable; it is to *come off* from all those things that stand in opposition to him or competition with him, and to *come up* to those terms upon which life and salvation are offered to us through him. When he was here on earth it was more than barely coming where he was; so it is now more than coming to his word and ordinances.

[2.] It is to *feed upon Christ* (v. 51): *If any man eat of this bread*. The former denotes applying ourselves to Christ; this denotes applying Christ to ourselves, with appetite and delight, that we may receive life, and strength, and comfort from him. To feed on him as the Israelites on the manna, having quitted the *fleshpots* of Egypt, and not depending on the *labour of their hands* (to eat of that), but living purely on the bread given them from heaven.

(2.) He shows what is to be got by believing in Christ. What will he give us if we *come to him*? What shall we be the better if we *feed upon him*? *Want and death* are the chief things we dread; may we but be assured of the comforts of our being, and the continuance of it in the midst of these comforts, we have enough; now these two are here secured to true believers.

[1.] They shall never want, *never hunger, never thirst*, v. 35. Desires they have, earnest desires, but these so suitably, so seasonably, so abundantly satisfied, that they cannot be called hunger and thirst, which are uneasy and painful. Those that did eat manna, and drink of the rock, hungered and thirsted afterwards. Manna surfeited them; water out of the rock failed them. But there is such an *overflowing fulness* in Christ as can never be exhausted, and there are such *ever-flowing communications* from him as can never be interrupted.

[2.] They shall *never die*, not die eternally; for, *First*, He that believes on Christ has *everlasting life* (v. 47); he has the assurance of it, the grant of it, the earnest of it; he has it in the promise and first-fruits. Union with Christ and communion with God in Christ are *everlasting life* begun. *Secondly*, Whereas they that did *eat manna* died, Christ is such bread as a man may eat of and never die, v. 49, 50. Observe here, 1. the insufficiency of the typical manna: *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead*. There may be much good use made of the death of our fathers; their graves speak to us, and their monuments are our memorials, particularly of this, that the greatest *plenty* of the most *dainty* food will neither prolong the thread of life nor avert the stroke of death. Those that did eat manna, angel's food, died like other men. There could be nothing amiss in their diet, to shorten their days, nor could their deaths be hastened by the toils and fatigues of life (for they neither sowed nor reaped), and yet they died. (1.) Many of them died by the immediate strokes of God's vengeance for their unbelief and murmurings; for, *though they did eat that spiritual meat*, yet with many of them God was not well pleased, but they were *overthrown in the wilderness*, 1 Cor. x. 3—5. Their eating manna was no security to them from the *wrath of God*, as believing in Christ is to us. (2.) the rest of them died in a course of nature, and their carcasses fell, under a divine sentence, in that wilderness where they did *eat manna*. In that very age when miracles were *daily bread* was the life of man reduced to the stint it now stands at, as appears, Ps. xc. 10. Let them not then boast so much of *manna*. 2. The all-sufficiency of the true manna, of which the other was a type: *This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that truly divine and heavenly food, that a man may eat thereof and not die*; that is, not fall under the wrath of God, which is killing to the soul; *not die the second death*; no, nor the first death finally and irre-



coverably. *Not die*, that is, not perish, not come short of the heavenly Canaan, as the Israelites did of the earthly, for want of *faith*, though they had *manna*. This is further explained by that promise in the next words: *If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever*, v. 51. This is the meaning of this *never dying*: though he go down to death, he shall pass through it to that world where there shall be no more death. To *live for ever* is not to be for ever (the damned in hell shall be for ever, the soul of man was made for an endless state), but to be *happy* for ever. And because the body must needs die, and be as water spilt upon the ground, Christ here undertakes for the gathering of that up too (as before, v. 44, *I will raise him up at the last day*); and even that shall live for ever.

(3.) He shows what encouragements we have to believe in Christ. Christ here speaks of some who *had seen him and yet believed not*, v. 36. They saw his person and miracles, and heard him preach, and yet were not wrought upon to believe in him. Faith is not always the effect of sight; the soldiers were eye-witnesses of his resurrection, and yet, instead of believing in him, they *belied* him; so that it is a difficult thing to bring people to believe in Christ: and, by the operation of the Spirit of grace, those that *have not seen have yet believed*. Two things we are here assured of, to encourage our faith:—

[1.] That the Son will bid all those welcome that come to him (v. 37): *Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*. How welcome should this word be to our souls which bids us welcome to Christ! *Him that cometh*; it is in the singular number, denoting favour, not only to the body of believers in general, but to every particular soul that applies itself to Christ. Here, *First*, The duty required is a pure gospel duty: to come to Christ, that we may come to God by him. His beauty and love, those great attractives, must draw us to him; sense of need and fear of danger must drive us to him; any thing to bring us to Christ. *Secondly*, The promise is a pure gospel promise: *I will in no wise cast out*—*οὐ μὴ ἐκβαλῶ ἔξω*. There are two negatives: *I will not, no, I will not*. 1. Much favour is expressed here. We have reason to fear that he should cast us out. Considering our meanness, our vileness, our unworthiness to come, our weakness in coming, we may justly expect that he should frown upon us, and shut his doors against us; but he obviates these fears with this assurance, *he will not do it*; will not disdain us though we are mean, will not reject us though we are sinful. Do poor scholars come to him to be taught? Though they be dull and slow, he will not cast them out. Do poor patients come to him to be cured, poor clients come to him to be advised? Though their case be bad, and though they come empty-handed, he will in no wise cast them out. But, 2. More favour is implied than is expressed; what it is said

that he will not cast them out the meaning is, He will receive them, and entertain them, and give them all that which they come to him for. As he will not refuse them at their first coming, so he will not afterwards, upon every displeasure, cast them out. *His gifts and callings are without repentance*.

[2.] That the Father will, without fail, bring all those to him in due time that were given him. In the federal transactions between the Father and the Son, relating to man's redemption, as the Son undertook for the justification, sanctification, and salvation, of all that should come to him ("Let me have them put into my hands, and then leave the management of them to me"), so the Father, the fountain and original of being, life, and grace, undertook to put into his hand all that were given him, and bring them to him. Now,

*First*, He here assures us that this shall be done: *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me*, v. 37. Christ had complained (v. 36) of those who, though they had seen him, yet would not believe on him; and then he adds this,

a. For their conviction and awakening, plainly intimating that their not coming to him, and believing on him, if they persisted in it, would be a certain sign that they did not belong to the election of grace; for how can we think that God gave us to Christ if we give ourselves to the world and the flesh? 2 Peter i. 10.

b. For his own comfort and encouragement: *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious*. The election has obtained, and shall though multitudes be blinded, Rom. xi. 7. Though he lose many of his creatures, yet none of his charge: *All that the Father gives him shall come to him notwithstanding*. Here we have, (a.) The election described: *All that the father giveth me*, *πάντα δὲ δίδωμι*—every thing which the Father giveth to me; the persons of the elect, and all that belongs to them; all their services, all their interests. As all that he has is *theirs*, so all that they have is *his*, and he speaks of them as his all: they were given him in full recompense of his undertaking. Not only all persons, but all things, are gathered together in Christ (Eph. i. 10) and reconciled, Col. i. 20. The giving of the chosen remnant to Christ is spoken of (v. 39) as a thing done; he hath given them. Here it is spoken of as a thing in the doing; he giveth them; because, when the first begotten was brought into the world, it should seem, there was a renewal of the grant; see Heb. x. 5, &c. God was now about to give him the heathen for his inheritance (Ps. ii. 8), to put him in possession of the desolate heritages (Isa. xlix. 8), to divide him a portion with the great, Isa. liii. 12. And though the Jews, who saw him, believed not on him, yet these (saith he) shall come to me; the other sheep, which are not of this fold, shall be brought, ch. x. 15, 16. See Acts xiii. 45—48. (b.) The effect of it secured: *They shall*



come to me. This is not in the nature of a promise, but a prediction, that as many as were in the counsel of God ordained to life shall be brought to life by being brought to Christ. They are scattered, are mingled among the nations, yet none of them shall be forgotten; not a grain of God's corn shall be lost, as is promised, Amos ix. 9. They are by nature alienated from Christ, and averse to him, and yet they shall come. As God's omniscience is engaged for the finding of them all out, so is his omnipotence for the bringing of them all in. Not, They shall be driven to me, but, They shall come freely, shall be made willing.

Secondly, He here acquaints us how it shall be done. How shall those who are given to Christ be brought to him? Two things are to be done in order to it:—

a. Their understandings shall be enlightened; this is promised, v. 45, 46. It is written in the prophets, who spoke of these things before, And they shall be all taught of God; this we find, Isa. liv. 13, and Jer. xxxi. 34. They shall all know me. Note,

(a.) In order to our believing in Jesus Christ, it is necessary that we be taught of God; that is, [a.] That there be a divine revelation made to us, discovering to us both what we are to believe concerning Christ and why we are to believe it. There are some things which even nature teaches, but to bring us to Christ there is need of a higher light. [b.] That there be a divine work wrought in us, enabling us to understand and receive these revealed truths and the evidence of them. God, in giving us reason, teaches us more than the beasts of the earth; but in giving us faith he teaches more than the natural man. Thus all the church's children, all that are genuine, are taught of God; he hath undertaken their education.

(b.) It follows then, by way of inference from this, that every man that has heard and learned of the Father comes to Christ, v. 45. [a.] It is here implied that none will come to Christ but those that have heard and learned of the Father. We shall never be brought to Christ but under a divine conduct; except God by his grace enlighten our minds, inform our judgments, and rectify our mistakes, and not only tell us, that we may hear, but teach us, that we may learn the truth as it is in Jesus, we shall never be brought to believe in Christ. [b.] That this divine teaching does so necessarily produce the faith of God's elect that we may conclude that those who do not come to Christ have never heard nor learned of the Father; for, if they had, doubtless they would have come to Christ. In vain do men pretend to be taught of God if they believe not in Christ, for he teaches no other lesson, Gal. i. 8, 9. See how God deals with men as reasonable creatures, draws them with the cords of a man, opens the understanding first, and then by that, in a regular way, influences the inferior faculties; thus he comes in by the door,

but Satan, as a robber, climbs up another way. But lest any should dream of a visible appearance of God the Father to the children of men (to teach them these things), and entertain any gross conceptions about hearing and learning of the Father, he adds (v. 46). Not that any man hath seen the Father; it is implied, nor can see him, with bodily eyes, or may expect to learn of him as Moses did, to whom he spoke face to face; but God, in enlightening men's eyes and teaching them, works in a spiritual way. The Father of spirits hath access to, and influence upon, men's spirits, undiscerned. Those that have not seen his face have felt his power. And yet there is one intimately acquainted with the Father, he who is of God, Christ himself, he hath seen the Father, ch. i. 18. Note, First, Jesus Christ is of God in a peculiar manner, God of God, light of light; not only sent of God, but begotten of God before all worlds. Secondly, It is the prerogative of Christ to have seen the Father, perfectly to know him and his counsels. Thirdly, Even that illumination which is preparative to faith is conveyed to us through Christ. Those that learn of the Father, forasmuch as they cannot see him themselves, must learn of Christ, who alone hath seen him. As all divine discoveries are made through Christ, so through him all divine powers are exerted.

b. Their wills shall be bowed. If the soul of man had now its original rectitude there needed no more to influence the will than the illumination of the understanding; but in the depraved soul of fallen man there is a rebellion of the will against the right dictates of the understanding; a carnal mind which is enmity itself to the divine light and law. It is therefore requisite that there be a work of grace wrought upon the will, which is here called drawing (v. 44): No man can come to me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him. The Jews murmured at the doctrine of Christ; not only would not receive it themselves, but were angry that others did. Christ overheard their secret whisperings, and said (v. 43), "Murmur not among yourselves; lay not the fault of your dislike of my doctrine one upon another, as if it were because you find it generally distasted; no, it is owing to yourselves, and your own corrupt dispositions, which are such as amount to a moral impotency; your antipathies to the truths of God, and prejudices against them, are so strong that nothing less than a divine power can conquer them." And this is the case of all mankind "No man can come to me, can persuade himself to come up to the terms of the gospel, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him," v. 44. Observe, (a.) The nature of the work: It is drawing, which denotes not a force put upon the will, but a change wrought in the will, whereby of unwilling we are made willing, and a new bias is given to the soul by which it inclines to God. This



seems to be more than a *moral suasion*, for by that it is in the power of man to *draw*; yet it is not to be called a *physical impulse*, for it lies out of the road of *nature*; but he that *formed the spirit of man within him* by his creating power, and *fashions the hearts of men* by his providential influence, knows how to new-mould the soul, and to alter its bent and temper, and make it conformable to himself and his own will, without doing any wrong to its natural liberty. It is such a drawing as works not only a *compliance*, but a cheerful compliance, a complacency: *Draw us, and we will run after thee.* (b.) The necessity of it: *No man*, in this weak and helpless state, can come to Christ without it. As we *cannot* do any natural action without the concurrence of *common providence*, so we cannot do any action morally good without the influence of *special grace*, in which the *new man* lives, and moves, and has its being, as much as the *mere man* has in the divine providence. (c.) The author of it: *The Father who hath sent me.* The Father, having sent Christ, will succeed him, for he would not send him on a fruitless errand. Christ having undertaken to bring souls to glory, God promised him, in order thereunto, to bring them to him, and so to give him possession of those to whom he had given him a right. God, having by promise given the kingdom of Israel to David, did at length *draw the hearts* of the people to him; so, having sent Christ to save souls, he sends souls to him to be saved by him. (d.) The crown and perfection of this work: *And I will raise him up at the last day.* This is four times mentioned in this discourse, and doubtless it includes all the intermediate and preparatory workings of divine grace. When he *raises them up at the last day*, he will put the *last hand* to his undertaking, will *bring forth the topstone.* If he undertakes this, surely he can do any thing, and will do every thing that is necessary in order to it. Let our expectations be carried out towards a happiness reserved for the *last day*, when all the years of time shall be fully complete and ended.

4. Christ, having thus spoken of himself as the *bread of life*, and of faith as the *work of God*, comes more particularly to show *what of himself* is this bread, namely, his *flesh*, and that to believe is to eat of that, v. 51—58, where he still prosecutes the metaphor of food. Observe, here, the *preparation* of this food: *The bread that I will give is my flesh* (v. 51), *the flesh of the Son of man and his blood*, v. 53. *His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed*, v. 55. Observe, also, the *participation* of this food: *We must eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood* (v. 53); and again (v. 54), *Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood*; and the same words (v. 56, 57), he that *eateth me*. This is certainly a parable or figurative discourse, wherein the actings of the soul upon things

spiritual and divine are represented by bodily actions about things sensible, which made the truths of Christ more intelligible to some, and less so to others, Mark iv. 11—12. Now,

(1.) Let us see how this discourse of Christ was liable to mistake and misconception, that *men might see, and not perceive.* [1.] It was misconstrued by the carnal *Jews*, to whom it was first delivered (v. 52): *They strove among themselves*; they whispered in each other's ears their dissatisfaction: *How can this man give us his flesh to eat?* Christ spoke (v. 51) of giving his *flesh* for us, to suffer and die; but they, without due consideration, understood it of his giving it to us, to be eaten, which gave occasion to Christ to tell them that, however what he said was otherwise intended, yet even that also of *eating of his flesh* was no such absurd thing (if rightly understood) as *prima facie*—in the first instance, they took it to be. [2.] It has been wretchedly misconstrued by the church of Rome for the support of their monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, which gives the lie to our senses, contradicts the nature of a sacrament, and overthrows all convincing evidence. They, like these Jews here, understand it of a corporal and carnal eating of Christ's body, like Nicodemus, ch. 3, 4. The Lord's supper was not yet instituted, and therefore it could have no reference to that; it is a *spiritual* eating and drinking that is here spoken of, not a *sacramental*. [3.] It is misunderstood by many ignorant carnal people, who hence infer that, if they take the sacrament when they die, they shall certainly go to heaven, which, as it makes many that are weak causelessly uneasy if they want it, so it makes many that are wicked causelessly easy if they have it. Therefore,

(2.) Let us see how this discourse of Christ to be understood.

[1.] What is meant by the *flesh and blood of Christ*. It is called (v. 53), *The flesh of the Son of man, and his blood*, his as Messiah and Mediator: the *flesh and blood* which he assumed in his incarnation (Heb. ii. 14), and which he gave up in his death and suffering: *my flesh which I will give* to be crucified and slain. It is said to be *given for the life of the world*, that is, *First, Instead of the life of the world*, which was forfeited by sin, Christ gives his own flesh as a ransom or counter-price. Christ was our bail, bound *body for body* (as we say), and therefore his life must go for ours, that ours may be spared. *Here am I, let these go their way.* *Secondly, In order to the life of the world*, to purchase a general offer of eternal life to all the world, and the special assurances of it to all believers. So that the *flesh and blood* of the Son of man denote the Redeemer incarnate and dying; Christ and him crucified, and the redemption wrought out by him, with all the precious benefits of redemption: pardon of sin, acceptance with God, the adoption of sons,

access to the throne of grace, the promises of the covenant, and eternal life; these are called the *flesh and blood* of Christ, 1. Because they are purchased by his flesh and blood, by the breaking of his body, and the shedding of his blood. Well may the purchased privileges be denominated from the price that was paid for them, for it puts a value upon them; write upon them *pretium sanguinis—the price of blood*. 2. Because they are meat and drink to our souls. *Flesh with the blood* was prohibited (Gen. ix. 4), but the privileges of the gospel are as flesh and blood to us, prepared for the nourishment of our souls. He had before compared himself to *bread*, which is necessary food; here to *flesh*, which is delicious. It is a *feast of fat things*, Isa. xxv. 6. The soul is satisfied with Christ as *with marrow and fatness*, Ps. lxxiii. 5. It is *meat indeed, and drink indeed; truly so*, that is spiritually; so Dr. Whitby; as Christ is called the *true vine*; or *truly meat*, in opposition to the shows and shadows with which the world shams off those that feed upon it. In Christ and his gospel there is real supply, solid satisfaction; that is *meat indeed, and drink indeed*, which satisfies and replenishes, Jer. xxxi. 25, 26.

[2.] What is meant by *eating this flesh and drinking this blood*, which is so necessary and beneficial; it is certain that it means neither more nor less than believing in Christ. As we partake of meat and drink by eating and drinking, so we partake of Christ and his benefits by faith: and *believing in Christ* includes these four things, which *eating and drinking* do:—*First*, It implies an appetite to Christ. This spiritual eating and drinking begins with *hungering and thirsting* (Matt. v. 6), earnest and importunate desires after Christ, not willing to take up with any thing short of an interest in him: “Give me Christ or else I die.” *Secondly*, An application of Christ to ourselves. Meat *looked upon* will not nourish us, but meat *fed upon*, and so made *our own*, and as it were *one with us*. We must so accept of Christ as to appropriate him to ourselves: *my Lord, and my God*, ch. xx. 28. *Thirdly*, A *delight* in Christ and his salvation. The doctrine of Christ crucified must be *meat and drink* to us, most pleasant and delightful. We must feast upon the dainties of the *New Testament in the blood of Christ*, taking as great a complacency in the methods which Infinite Wisdom has taken to redeem and save us as ever we did in the most needful supplies or grateful delights of nature. *Fourthly*, A *derivation of nourishment* from him and a dependence upon him for the support and comfort of our spiritual life, and the strength, growth, and vigour of the new man. To *feed upon Christ* is to do all *in his name*, in union with him, and by virtue drawn from him; it is to live upon him as we do upon our meat. How our bodies are nourished by our food we cannot describe, but that

they are so we know and find; so it is with this spiritual nourishment. Our Saviour was so well pleased with this metaphor (as very significant and expressive) that, when afterwards he would institute some outward sensible signs, by which to represent our *communicating* of the benefits of his death, he chose those of *eating and drinking*, and made them *sacramental* actions.

(3.) Having thus explained the general meaning of this part of Christ's discourse, the particulars are reducible to two heads:—

[1.] The *necessity* of our *feeding upon Christ* (v. 53): *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you*. That is, *First*, “It is a certain sign that you *have no spiritual life* in you if you have no *desire* towards Christ, nor *delight* in him.” If the soul does not *hunger and thirst*, certainly it does not *live*: it is a sign that we are dead indeed if we are dead to such meat and drink as this. When *artificial* bees, that by curious springs were made to move to and fro, were to be *distinguished* from *natural* ones (they say), it was done by putting honey among them, which the natural bees only flocked to, but the artificial ones minded not, for *they had no life in them*. *Secondly*, “It is certain that you can *have no spiritual life*, unless you derive it from Christ by faith; separated from him you can do nothing. Faith in Christ is the *primum vivens—the first living principle* of grace; without it we have not the *truth of spiritual life*, nor any title to eternal life: our bodies may as well live without meat as our souls without Christ.

[2.] The *benefit and advantage* of it, in two things:—

*First*, We shall be *one with Christ*, as our bodies are with our food when it is digested (v. 56): *He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, that lives by faith in Christ crucified* (it is spoken of as a continued act), he *dwelleth in me, and I in him*. By faith we have a close and intimate union with Christ; he is *in us*, and we *in him*, ch. xvii. 21—23; 1 John iii. 24. Believers dwell in Christ as their stronghold or city of refuge; Christ dwells in them as the master of the house, to rule it and provide for it. Such is the union between Christ and believers that he shares in their griefs, and they share in his graces and joys; he *sups* with them upon their bitter herbs, and *they with him* upon his *rich dainties*. It is an inseparable union, like that between the body and digested food, Rom. viii. 35; 1 John iv. 13.

*Secondly*, We shall *live*, shall live eternally, *by him*, as our bodies live by our food.

a. We shall *live by him* (v. 57): *As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me*. We have here the series and order of the divine life. (a.) God is the *living Father*, hath life in and of himself. *I am that I am* is his name for ever. (b.) Jesus Christ, as Mediator, *lives by the Father*; he has life in



himself (ch. v. 26), but he has it of the Father. He that sent him, not only qualified him with that life which was necessary to so great an undertaking, but constituted him the treasury of divine life to us; he breathed into the second Adam the breath of spiritual lives, as into the first Adam the breath of natural lives. (c.) True believers receive this divine life by virtue of their union with Christ, which is inferred from the union between the Father and the Son, as it is compared to it, ch. xvii. 21. For therefore *he that eateth me, or feeds on me, even he shall live by me*: those that live upon Christ shall live by him. The life of believers is had from Christ (ch. i. 16); it is hid with Christ (Col. iii. 4), we live by him as the members by the head, the branches by the root; because he lives, we shall live also.

b. We shall live eternally by him (v. 54): *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood*, as prepared in the gospel to be the food of souls, he hath eternal life, he hath it now, as v. 40. He has that in him which is eternal life begun; he has the earnest and foretaste of it, and the hope of it; he shall live for ever, v. 58. His happiness shall run parallel with the longest line of eternity itself.

Lastly, The historian concludes with an account where Christ had this discourse with the Jews (v. 59): *In the synagogue as he taught*, implying that he taught them many other things besides these, but this was that in his discourse which was new. He adds this, that he said these things in the synagogue, to show, 1. The credit of Christ's doctrine. His truths sought no corners, but were publicly preached in mixed assemblies, as able to abide the most severe and impartial test. Christ pleaded this upon his trial (ch. xviii. 20): *I ever taught in the synagogue*. 2. The credibility of this narrative of it. To assure you that the discourse was fairly represented, he appeals to the synagogue at Capernaum, where it might be examined.

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? 61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? 62 What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? 63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. 64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me,

except it were given unto him of my Father. 66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. 67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. 70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? 71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

We have here an account of the effects of Christ's discourse. Some were offended and others edified by it; some driven from him and others brought nearer to him.

I. To some it was a savour of death unto death; not only to the Jews, who were professed enemies to him and his doctrine, but even to many of his disciples, such as were disciples at large, who were his frequent hearers, and followed him in public; a mixed multitude, like those among Israel, that began all the discontents. Now here we have,

1. Their murmurings at the doctrine they heard (v. 60); not a few, but many of them, were offended at it. Of the several sorts of ground that received the seed, only one in four brought forth fruit. See what they say to it (v. 60): *This is a hard saying, who can hear it?* (1.) They do not like it themselves: "What stuff is this? *Eat the flesh, and drink the blood, of the Son of man!* If it is to be understood figuratively, it is not intelligible; if literally, not practicable. What! must we turn cannibals? Can we not be religious, but we must be barbarous?" *Si Christiani adorant quod comedunt* (said Averroes), *sit anima mea cum philosophis*—If Christians adore what they eat, my mind shall continue with the philosophers. Now, when they found it a hard saying, if they had humbly begged of Christ to have declared unto them this parable, he would have opened it, and their understandings too; for the meek will he teach his way. But they were not willing to have Christ's sayings explained to them, because they would not lose this pretence for rejecting them—that they were hard sayings. (2.) They think it impossible that any one else should like it: "Who can hear it? Surely none can." Thus the scoffers at religion are ready to undertake that all the intelligent part of mankind concur with them. They conclude with great assurance that no man of sense will admit the doctrine of Christ, nor any man of spirit submit to his laws. Because they cannot bear



to be so tutored, so tied up, themselves, they think none else can: *Who can hear it?* Thanks be to God, thousands have heard these sayings of Christ, and have found them not only easy, but pleasant, as their necessary food.

2. Christ's animadversions upon their murmurings.

(1.) He well enough knew their murmurings, v. 61. Their cavils were secret in their own breasts, or whispered among themselves in a corner. But, [1.] Christ knew them; he saw them, he heard them. Note, Christ takes notice not only of the bold and open defiance that are done to his name and glory by daring sinners, but of the secret slights that are put upon his doctrine by carnal professors; he knows that which the fool saith in his heart, and cannot for shame speak out; he observes how his doctrine is resented by those to whom it is preached; who rejoice in it, and who murmur at it; who are reconciled to it, and bow before it, and who quarrel with it, and rebel against it, though ever so secretly. [2.] He knew it in himself, not by any information given him, nor any external indication of the thing, but by his own divine omniscience. He knew it not as the prophets, by a divine revelation made to him (that which the prophets desired to know was sometimes hid from them, as 2 Kings iv. 27), but by a divine knowledge in him. He is that essential Word that discerns the thoughts of the heart, Heb. iv. 12, 13. Thoughts are words to Christ; we should therefore take heed not only what we say and do, but what we think.

(2.) He well enough knew how to answer them: "*Doth this offend you?*" Is this a stumbling-block to you?" See how people by their own wilful mistakes create offences to themselves: they take offence where there is none given, and even make it where there is nothing to make it of. Note, We may justly wonder that so much offence should be taken at the doctrine of Christ for so little cause. Christ speaks of it here with wonder: "*Doth this offend you?*" How unreasonable are your quarrels!" Now, in answer to those who condemned his doctrine as intricate and obscure (*Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi*—If you are unwilling to be understood, you ought to be neglected),

[1.] He gives them a hint of his ascension into heaven, as that which would give an irresistible evidence of the truth of his doctrine (v. 62): *What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?* And what then? First, "If I should tell you of that, surely it would much more offend you, and you would think my pretensions too high indeed. If this be so hard a saying that you cannot hear it, how will you digest it when I tell you of my returning to heaven, whence I came down?" See ch. iii. 12. Those who stumble at smaller difficulties should consider how they will get over greater.

Secondly, "When you see the Son of man ascend, this will much more offend you, for then my body will be less capable of being eaten by you in that gross sense wherein you now understand it;" so Dr. Whitby. Or, Thirdly, "When you see that, or hear it from those that shall see it, surely then you will be satisfied. You think I take too much upon me when I say, *I came down from heaven*, for it was with this that you quarrelled (v. 42); but will you think so when you see me return to heaven?" If he ascended, certainly he descended, Eph. iv. 9, 10. Christ did often refer himself thus to subsequent proofs, as ch. i. 50, 51; ii. 14; Matt. xii. 40; xxvi. 64. Let us wait awhile, till the mystery of God shall be finished, and then we shall see that there was no reason to be offended at any of Christ's sayings.

[2.] He gives them a general key to this and all such parabolical discourses, teaching them that they are to be understood spiritually, and not after a corporal and carnal manner: *It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing*, v. 63. As it is in the natural body, the animal spirits quicken and enliven it, and without these the most nourishing food would profit nothing (what would the body be the better for bread, if it were not quickened and animated by the spirit), so it is with the soul. First, The bare participation of ordinances, unless the Spirit of God work with them, and quicken the soul by them, profits nothing; the word and ordinances, if the Spirit works with them, are as food to a living man, if not, they are as food to a dead man. Even the flesh of Christ, the sacrifice for sin, will avail us nothing unless the blessed Spirit quicken our souls thereby, and enforce the powerful influences of his death upon us, till we by his grace are planted together in the likeness of it. Secondly, The doctrine of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood, if it be understood literally, profits nothing, but rather leads us into mistakes and prejudices; but the spiritual sense or meaning of it quickens the soul, makes it alive and lively; for so it follows: *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. To eat the flesh of Christ!* this is a hard saying, but to believe that Christ died for me, to derive from that doctrine strength and comfort in my approaches to God, my oppositions to sin and preparations for a future state, this is the spirit and life of that saying, and, construing it thus, it is an excellent saying. The reason why men dislike Christ's sayings is because they mistake them. The literal sense of a parable does us no good, we are never the wiser for it, but the spiritual meaning is instructive. Thirdly, *The flesh profits nothing*—those that are in the flesh (so some understand it), that are under the power of a carnal mind, profit not by Christ's discourses; but the Spirit quickeneth—those that have the Spirit, that are spiritual, are quickened and enlivened.



vened by them; for they are received *ad modum recipientis*—so as to correspond with the state of the receiver's mind. They found fault with Christ's sayings, whereas the fault was in themselves; it is only to sensual minds that spiritual things are senseless and sapless, spiritual minds relish them; see 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

[3.] He gives them an intimation of his knowledge of them, and that he had expected no better from them, though they called themselves his disciples, v. 64, 65. Now was fulfilled that of the prophet, speaking of Christ and his doctrine (Isa. liii. 1), *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Both these Christ here takes notice of.

First, They did not believe his report: "There are some of you who said you would leave all to follow me who yet believe not;" and this was the reason why the word preached did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith, Heb. iv. 2. They did not believe him to be the Messiah, else they would have acquiesced in the doctrine he preached, and not have quarrelled with it, though there were some things in it dark, and hard to be understood. *Oportet discendum credere*—Young beginners in learning must take things upon their teacher's word. Note, 1. Among those who are nominal Christians, there are many who are real infidels. 2. The unbelief of hypocrites, before it discovers itself to the world, is naked and open before the eyes of Christ. He knew from the beginning who they were of the multitudes that followed him that believed, and who of the twelve should betray him; he knew from the beginning of their acquaintance with him, and attendance on him, when they were in the hottest pang of their zeal, who were sincere, as Nathanael (ch. i. 47), and who were not. Before they distinguished themselves by an overt act, he could infallibly distinguish who believed and who did not, whose love was counterfeit and whose cordial. We may gather hence, (1.) That the apostasy of those who have long made a plausible profession of religion is a certain proof of their constant hypocrisy, and that from the beginning they believed not, but is not a proof of the possibility of the total and final apostasy of any true believers: such revolts are not to be called the fall of real saints, but the discovery of pretended ones; see 1 John ii. 19. *Stella cadens non stella fuit*—The star that falls never was a star. (2.) That it is Christ's prerogative to know the heart; he knows who they are that believe not, but dissemble in their profession, and yet continues them room in his church, the use of his ordinances, and the credit of his name, and does not discover them in this world, unless they by their own wickedness discover themselves; because such is the constitution of his visible church, and the discovering day is yet to come. But, if we pretend to judge men's hearts, we step into

Christ's throne, and anticipate his judgment. We are often deceived in men, and see cause to change our sentiments of them; but this we are sure of, that Christ knows all men, and his judgment is according to truth.

Secondly, The reason why they did not believe his report was because the arm of the Lord was not revealed to them (v. 65): *Therefore said I unto you that no man can come to me, except it be given unto him of my Father*; referring to v. 44. Christ therefore could not but know who believed and who did not, because faith is the gift and work of God, and all his Father's gifts and works could not but be known to him, for they all passed through his hands. There he had said that none could come to him, except the Father draw him; here he saith, except it be given him of my Father, which shows that God draws souls by giving them grace and strength, and a heart to come, without which, such is the moral impotency of man, in his fallen state, that he cannot come.

3. We have here their final apostasy from Christ hereupon: *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*, v. 66. When we admit into our minds hard thoughts of the word and works of Christ, and conceive a secret dislike, and are willing to hear insinuations tending to their reproach, we are then entering into temptation; it is as the letting forth of water; it is looking back, which, if infinite mercy prevent not, will end in drawing back; therefore *Obsta principiis*—Take heed of the beginnings of apostasy. (1.) See here the backsliding of these disciples. Many of them went back to their houses, and families, and callings, which they had left for a time to follow him; went back, one to his farm and another to his merchandise; went back, as Orpah did, to their people, and to their gods, Ruth i. 15. They had entered themselves in Christ's school, but they went back, did not only play truant for once, but took leave of him and his doctrine for ever. Note, The apostasy of Christ's disciples from him, though really a strange thing, yet has been such a common thing that we need not be surprised at it. Here were many that went back. It is often so; when some backslide many backslide with them; the disease is infectious. (2.) The occasion of this backsliding: *From that time*, from the time that Christ preached this comfortable doctrine, that he is the bread of life, and that those who by faith feed upon him shall live by him (which, one would think, should have engaged them to cleave more closely to him)—from that time they withdrew. Note, The corrupt and wicked heart of man often makes that an occasion of offence which is indeed matter of the greatest comfort. Christ foresaw that they would thus take offence at what he said, and yet he said it. That which is the undoubted word and truth of Christ must be faithfully delivered, whoever may be offended at it. Men's humours must be captivated to God's word, and not God's word accommodated to men's

humours. (3.) The degree of their apostasy: *They walked no more with him*, returned no more to him and attended no more upon his ministry. It is hard for those who have been *once enlightened*, and have *tasted the good word of God*, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, Heb. vi. 4—6.

II. This discourse was to others a *savour of life unto life*. Many went back, but, thanks be to God, all did not; even then the *twelve* stuck to him. Though the *faith of some be overthrown*, yet the *foundation of God stands sure*. Observe here,

1. The affectionate question which Christ put to the twelve (v. 67): *Will you also go away?* He saith nothing to those who went back. *If the unbelieving depart, let them depart*; it was no great loss of those whom he never had; lightly come, lightly go; but he takes this occasion to speak to the twelve, to confirm them, and by trying their steadfastness the more to fix them: *Will you also go away?* (1.) "It is at your choice whether you will or no; if you will forsake me, now is the time, when so many do: it is an hour of temptation; if you will go back, go now." Note, Christ will detain none with him against their wills; his soldiers are volunteers, not pressed men. The twelve had now had time enough to try how they liked Christ and his doctrine, and that none of them might afterwards say that they were trepanned into discipleship, and if it were to do again they would not do it, he here allows them a power of revocation, and leaves them at their liberty; as Josh. xxiv. 15; Ruth i. 15. (2.) "It is at your peril if you do go away." If there was any secret inclination in the heart of any of them to depart from him, he stops it with this awakening question, "*Will you also go away?*" Think not that you hang at as loose an end as they did, and may go away as easily as they could. They have not been so intimate with me as you have been, nor received so many favours from me; they are gone, but will you also go? Remember your character, and say, Whatever others do, we will never go away. *Should such a man as I flee?*" Neh. vi. 11. Note, The nearer we have been to Christ and the longer we have been with him, the more mercies we have received from him and the more engagements we have laid ourselves under to him, the greater will be our sin if we desert him. (3.) "I have reason to think you will not. Will you go away? No, I have faster hold of you than so; *I hope better things of you* (Heb. vi. 9), for you are they that have continued with me," Luke xxii. 28. When the apostasy of some is a grief to the Lord Jesus, the constancy of others is so much the more his honour, and he is pleased with it accordingly. Christ and believers know one another too well to part upon every displeasure.

2. The believing reply which Peter, in the name of the rest, made to this question, v. 68—69. Christ put the question to them, as

Joshua put Israel to their choice whom they would serve, with design to draw out from them a promise to adhere to him, and it had the like effect. *Nay, but we will serve the Lord* Peter was upon all occasions the *mouth of the rest*, not so much because he had more of his Master's ear than they, but because he had more tongue of his own; and what he said was sometimes approved and sometimes reprimanded (Matt. xvi. 17, 23)—the common lot of those who are swift to speak. This here was well said, admirably well; and probably he said it by the direction, and with the express assent, of his fellow-disciples; at least he knew their mind, and spoke the sense of them all, and did not except Judas, for we must hope the best.

(1.) Here is a good resolution to adhere to Christ, and so expressed as to intimate that they would not entertain the least thought of leaving him: "*Lord, to whom shall we go?*" It were folly to go from thee, unless we knew where to better ourselves; no, Lord, we like our choice too well to change." Note, Those who leave Christ would do well to consider to whom they will go, and whether they can expect to find rest and peace any where but in him. See Ps. lxxiii. 27, 28; Hos. ii. 9. "*Whither shall we go?*" Shall we make our court to the world? It will certainly deceive us. Shall we return to sin? It will certainly destroy us. Shall we leave the *fountain of living waters* for *broken cisterns*?" The disciples resolve to continue their pursuit of life and happiness, and will have a guide to it, and will adhere to Christ as their guide, for they can never have a better. "Shall we go to the heathen philosophers, and become their disciples? They are become vain in their imaginations, and, professing themselves to be wise in other things, are become fools in religion. Shall we go to the scribes and Pharisees, and sit at their feet? What good can they do us who have made void the commandments of God by their traditions? Shall we go to Moses? He will send us back again to thee. Therefore, if ever we find the way to happiness, it must be in following thee." Note, Christ's holy religion appears to great advantage when it is compared with other institutions, for then it will be seen how far it excels them all. Let those who find fault with this religion find a better before they quit it. A divine teacher we must have; can we find a better than Christ? A divine revelation we cannot be without; if the scripture be not such a one, where else may we look for it?

(2.) Here is a good reason for this resolution. It was not the inconsiderate resolve of a blind affection, but the result of mature deliberation. The disciples were resolved never to go away from Christ,

[1.] Because of the *advantage* they promised themselves by him: *Thou hast the words of eternal life*. They themselves did not fully understand Christ's discourse, for as yet the doctrine of the cross was a riddle



to them; but in the general they were satisfied that *he had the words of eternal life*, that is, *First*, That the word of his doctrine showed the way to *eternal life*, set it before us, and directed us what to do, that we might inherit it. *Secondly*, That the word of his determination must confer eternal life. His *having the words of eternal life* is the same with his *having power to give eternal life to as many as were given him*, ch. xvii. 2. He had in the foregoing discourse assured *eternal life* to his followers; these disciples fastened upon this plain saying, and therefore resolved to stick to him, when the others overlooked this, and fastened upon the *hard sayings*, and therefore forsook him. Though we cannot account for every mystery, every obscurity, in Christ's doctrine, yet we know, in the general, that it is the word of eternal life, and therefore must live and die by it; for if we forsake Christ *we forsake our own mercies*.

[2.] Because of the assurance they had concerning him (v. 69): *We believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ*. If he be the promised Messiah, he must *bring in an everlasting righteousness* (Dan. ix. 24), and therefore has the words of *eternal life*, for *righteousness reigns to eternal life*, Rom. v. 21. Observe, *First*, The doctrine they believed: that this Jesus was the Messiah promised to the fathers and expected by them, and that he was not a mere man, but the Son of the living God, the same to whom God had said, *Thou art my Son*, Ps. ii. 7. In times of temptation to apostasy it is good to have recourse to our first principles, and stick to them; and, if we faithfully abide by that which is *past dispute*, we shall be the better able both to *find* and to *keep* the truth in matters of doubtful disputation. *Secondly*, The degree of their faith: it rose up to a full assurance: *We are sure*. We have known it *by experience*; this is the best knowledge. We should take occasion from others' wavering to be so much the more established, especially in that which is the present truth. When we have so strong a faith in the gospel of Christ as boldly to venture our souls upon it, knowing *whom we have believed*, then, and not till then, we shall be willing to venture every thing else for it.

3. The melancholy remark which our Lord Jesus made upon this reply of Peter's (v. 70, 71): *Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?* And the evangelist tells us whom he meant: *he spoke of Judas Iscariot*. Peter had undertaken for them all that they would be faithful to their Master. Now Christ does not condemn his charity (it is always good to hope the best), but he tacitly corrects his confidence. We must not be too sure concerning any. God knows those that are his; we do not. Observe here, (1.) Hypocrites and betrayers of Christ are no better than devils. Judas not only *had* a devil, but he *was* a devil. One of you is a *false accuser*; so διαβολός sometimes

signifies (2 Tim. iii. 3); and it is probable that Judas, when he sold his Master to the chief priests, represented him to them as a bad man, to justify himself in what he did. But I rather take it as we read it: *He is a devil*, a devil incarnate, a fallen apostle, as the devil a fallen angel. He is Satan, an adversary, an enemy to Christ. He is Abaddon, and Apollyon, a son of perdition. He was of his father the devil, did his lusts, was in his interests, as Cain, 1 John iii. 12. Those whose bodies were possessed by the devil are never called *devils* (*demoniacs*, but not *devils*); but Judas, into whose heart Satan entered, and filled it, is called a *devil*. (2.) Many that are *seeming saints* are *real devils*. Judas had as fair an outside as many of the apostles; his venom was, like that of the serpent, covered with a fine skin. He *cast out devils*, and appeared an enemy to the devil's kingdom, and yet was himself a devil all the while. Not only he *will be* one shortly, but he *is one* now. It is *strange*, and to be wondered at; Christ speaks of it with wonder: *Have not I?* It is *sad*, and to be lamented, that ever Christianity should be made a cloak to diabolism. (3.) The disguises of hypocrites, however they may deceive men, and put a cheat upon them, cannot deceive Christ, for his piercing eye sees through them. He can call those *devils* that call themselves *Christians*, like the prophet's greeting to Jeroboam's wife, when she came to him in masquerade (1 Kings xiv. 6): *Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam*. Christ's *divine sight*, far better than any *double sight*, can see spirits. (4.) There are those who are chosen by Christ to special services who yet prove false to him: *I have chosen you to the apostleship*, for it is expressly said that Judas was not chosen to eternal life (ch. xiii. 18), and yet one of *you* is a devil. Note, Advancement to places of honour and trust in the church is no certain evidence of saving grace. *We have prophesied in thy name*. (5.) In the most select societies on this side heaven it is no new thing to meet with those that are corrupt. Of the twelve that were chosen to an intimate conversation with an *incarnate Deity*, as great an honour and privilege as ever men were chosen to, one was an *incarnate devil*. The historian lays an emphasis upon this, that Judas was *one of the twelve* that were so dignified and distinguished. Let us not reject and unchurch the twelve because *one of them is a devil*, nor say that they are all cheats and hypocrites because one of them was so; let those that are so bear the blame, and not those who, while they are undiscovered, incorporate with them. There is a society within the veil into which no unclean thing shall enter, a church of first-born, in which are no *false brethren*.

## CHAP. VII.

In this chapter we have, I. Christ's declining for some time to appear publicly in Judea, ver. 1. II. His design to go up to Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles, and his discourse with his kinsred in Galilee concerning his going up to this feast, ver. 2-13. III. His preaching publicly in the temple at that feast. 1. In the middle of the feast ver. 14, 15. We have his discourse with the Jews,



(1.) Concerning his doctrine, ver. 16—18. (2.) Concerning the crime of sabbath-breaking laid to his charge, ver. 19—24. (3.) Concerning himself, both whence he came and whither he was going, ver. 25—36. 2. On the last day of the feast. (1.) His gracious invitation to poor souls to come to him, ver. 37—39. (2.) The reception that it met with. (1.) Many of the people disputed about it, ver. 40—41. (2.) The chief priests would have brought him into trouble for it, but were first disappointed by their officers (ver. 46—49) and then silenced by one of their own court, ver. 50—53.

**A**FTER these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. 2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. 3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. 4 For *there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.* 5 For neither did his brethren believe in him. 6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. 7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. 8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. 9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode *still* in Galilee. 10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. 11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? 12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. 13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

We have here, I. The reason given why Christ spent more of his time in Galilee than in Judea (v. 1): *because the Jews, the people in Judea and Jerusalem, sought to kill him, for curing the impotent man on the sabbath day, ch. v. 16.* They thought to be the death of him, either by a popular tumult or by a legal prosecution, in consideration of which he kept at a distance in another part of the country, very much out of the lines of Jerusalem's communication. It is not said, He *durst not*, but, He *would not*, walk in Jewry; it was not through fear and cowardice that he declined it, but in *prudence*, because his hour was not yet come. Note, 1. Gospel light is justly *taken away* from those that en-

deavour to extinguish it. Christ will withdraw from those that drive him from them, will hide his face from those that spit in it, and justly shut up his bowels from those who spurn at them. 2. In times of imminent peril it is not only *allowable*, but *advisable*, to *withdraw* and *abscond* for our own safety and preservation, and to choose the service of those places which are least perilous, Matt. x. 23. *Then, and not till then*, we are called to expose and lay down our lives, when we cannot save them without sin. 3. If the providence of God casts persons of *merit* into places of obscurity and little note, it must not be thought strange; it was the lot of our Master himself. He who was fit to have sat in the highest of Moses's seats willingly walked in Galilee among the ordinary sort of people. Observe, He did not sit still in Galilee, nor bury himself alive there, but *walked*; he went about doing good. When we cannot do *what* and *where* we *would*, we must do *what* and *where* we *can*.

II. The approach of the *feast of tabernacles* (v. 2), one of the three solemnities which called for the personal attendance of all the males at Jerusalem; see the institution of it, Lev. xxiii. 34, &c., and the revival of it after a long disuse, Neh. viii. 14. It was intended to be both a *memorial* of the tabernacle state of Israel in the wilderness, and a *figure* of the tabernacle state of God's spiritual Israel in this world. This feast, which was instituter so many hundred years before, was still religiously observed. Note, Divine institutions are never antiquated, nor go out of date, by length of time: nor must wilderness mercies ever be forgotten. But it is called the *Jews' feast*, because it was now shortly to be *abolished*, as a mere Jewish thing, and left to them that *served the tabernacle*.

III. Christ's discourse with his *brethren*, some of his kindred, whether by his mother or his supposed father is not certain; but they were such as pretended to have an interest in him, and therefore interposed to advise him in his conduct. And observe,

1. Their ambition and vain-glory in urging him to make a more public appearance than he did: "*Depart hence,*" said they, "*and go into Judea* (v. 3), where thou wilt make a better figure than thou canst here."

(1.) They give two reasons for this advice [1.] That it would be an encouragement to those in and about Jerusalem who had a respect for him; for, expecting his temporal kingdom, the royal seat of which they concluded must be at Jerusalem, they would have had the disciples *there* particularly countenanced, and thought the time he spent among his Galilean disciples wasted and thrown away, and his miracles turning to no account unless those at Jerusalem saw them. Or, "*That thy disciples*, all of them in general, who will be gathered at Jerusalem to keep the feast, may *see thy works* and not, as here, a few at one time and a few at another." [2.] That it



would be for the advancement of his name and honour : *There is no man that does any thing in secret if he himself seeks to be known openly.* They took it for granted that Christ sought to make himself known, and therefore thought it absurd for him to conceal his miracles : "*If thou do these things, if thou be so well able to gain the applause of the people and the approbation of the rulers by thy miracles, venture abroad, and show thyself to the world.*" Supported with these credentials, thou canst not fail of acceptance, and therefore it is high time to set up for an interest, and to think of being *great*."

(2.) One would not think there was any harm in this advice, and yet the evangelist notes it is an evidence of their infidelity : *For neither did his brethren believe in him (v. 5), if they had, they would not have said this.* Observe, [1.] It was an honour to be of the kindred of Christ, but no *saving* honour ; they that hear his word and keep it are the kindred he values. Surely grace runs in no blood in the world, when not in that of Christ's family. [2.] It was a sign that Christ did not aim at any secular interest, for then his kindred would have struck in with him, and he would have secured them first. [3.] There were those who were akin to Christ according to the flesh who did believe in him (three of the twelve were *his brethren*), and yet others, as nearly allied to him as they, did not believe in him. Many that have the same external privileges and advantages do not make the same use of them. But,

(3.) What was there amiss in the advice which they gave him ? I answer, [1.] It was a piece of presumption for them to prescribe to Christ, and to teach him what measures to take ; it was a sign that they *did not believe* him able to guide them, when they did not think him sufficient to guide himself. [2.] They discovered a great carelessness about his safety, when they would have him go to Judea, where they knew the Jews sought to kill him. Those that believed in him, and loved him, dissuaded him from Judea, *ch. xi. 8.* [3.] Some think they hoped that if his miracles were wrought at Jerusalem the Pharisees and rulers would try them, and discover some cheat in them, which would justify their unbelief. So Dr. Whitby. [4.] Perhaps they were weary of his company in Galilee (*for are not all these that speak Galileans ?*) and this was, in effect, a desire that he would *depart out of their coasts.* [5.] They causelessly insinuate that he neglected his disciples, and denied them such a *sight of his works* as was necessary to the support of their faith. [6.] They tacitly reproach him as *mean-spirited*, that he durst not enter the lists with the great men, nor trust himself upon the stage of public action, which, if he had any courage and *greatness of soul*, he would do, and not sneak thus and skulk in a corner ; thus Christ's humility, and his humiliation, and the small figure which his

religion has usually made in the world, have been often turned to the reproach of both *him and it.* [7.] They seem to question the truth of the miracles he wrought, in saying, "*If thou do these things, if they will bear the test of a public scrutiny in the courts above, produce them there.*" [8.] They think Christ altogether such a one as themselves, as subject as they to worldly policy, and as desirous as they to *make a fair show in the flesh* ; whereas he sought not honour from men. [9.] Self was at the bottom of all ; they hoped, if he would make himself as great as he might, they, being his kinsmen, should share in his honour, and have respect paid them for his sake. Note, *First*, Many carnal people go to public ordinances, to worship at the feast, only to *show themselves*, and all their care is to make a *good appearance*, to present themselves handsomely to the world. *Secondly*, Many that seem to seek Christ's honour do really therein seek their own, and make it serve a turn for themselves.

2. The prudence and humility of our Lord Jesus, which appeared in his answer to the advice his brethren gave him, *v. 6—8.* Though there were so many base insinuations in it, he answered them mildly. Note, Even that which is said without *reason* should be answered without *passion* ; we should learn of our Master to reply with meekness even to that which is most *impertinent* and *imperious*, and, where it is easy to find much amiss, to seem not to see it, and wink at the affront. They expected Christ's company with them to the feast, perhaps hoping he would bear their charges : but here,

(1.) He shows the difference between himself and them, in two things :—[1.] *His time was set, so was not theirs : My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready.* Understand it of the time of his going up to the feast. It was an indifferent thing to them when they went, for they had nothing of moment to do either where they were, to *detain* them *there*, or where they were going, to *hasten* them *thither* ; but every minute of Christ's time was precious, and had its own particular business allotted to it. He had some work yet to do in Galilee before he left the country : in the harmony of the gospels betwixt this *motion* made by his kindred and his *going up* to this feast comes in the story of his sending forth the seventy disciples (*Luke x. 1, &c.*), which was an affair of very great consequence ; his time is *not yet*, for that must be done first. Those who live useless lives have *their time always ready* ; they can go and come when they please. But those whose *time* is filled up with *duty* will often find themselves *straitened*, and they have *not yet time* for that which others can do at *any time*. Those who are made the servants of God, as all men are, and who have made themselves the servants of all, as all useful men have, must not expect

nor covet to be *masters of their own time*. The confinement of business is a thousand times better than the liberty of idleness. Or, it may be meant of the *time* of his appearing publicly at Jerusalem; Christ, who knows all men and all things, knew that the best and most proper time for it would be about the *middle of the feast*. We, who are ignorant and short-sighted, are apt to prescribe to him, and to think he should deliver his people, and so show himself now. The present time is *our time*, but he is fittest to judge, and, it may be, *his time is not yet come*; his people are not yet ready for deliverance, nor his enemies ripe for ruin; let us therefore wait with patience for *his time*, for all he does will be most glorious in its season. [2.] His *life was sought*, so was not *theirs*, v. 7. They, in *showing themselves* to the world, did not expose themselves: "*The world cannot hate you, for you are of the world, its children, its servants, and in with its interests; and no doubt the world will love its own*;" see ch. xv. 19. Unholy souls, whom the holy God *cannot love*, the world that lies in wickedness *cannot hate*; but Christ, in showing himself to the world, laid himself open to the greatest danger; for *me it hateth*. Christ was not only *slighted*, as inconsiderable in the world (*the world knew him not*), but *hated*, as if he had been hurtful to the world; thus ill was he requited for his love to the world: reigning sin is a rooted antipathy and enmity to Christ. But why did the world hate Christ? What evil had he done to it? Had he, like Alexander, under colour of conquering it, laid it waste? "No, but because" (saith he) "*I testify of it, that the works of it are evil*." Note, *First*, The works of an evil world are *evil works*; as the tree is, so are the fruits: it is a dark world, and an apostate world, and its works are works of darkness and rebellion. *Secondly*, Our Lord Jesus, both by himself and by his ministers, did and will both discover and testify against the evil works of this wicked world. *Thirdly*, It is a great uneasiness and provocation to the world to be convicted of the evil of its works. It is for the honour of virtue and piety that those who are impious and vicious do not care for hearing of it, for their own consciences make them *ashamed* of the turpitude there is *in sin and afraid* of the punishment that follows *after sin*. *Fourthly*, Whatever is *pretended*, the *real* cause of the world's enmity to the gospel is the testimony it bears against sin and sinners. Christ's witnesses by their doctrine and conversation *torment* those that dwell on the earth, and therefore are treated so barbarously, Rev. xi. 10. But it is better to incur the world's hatred, by testifying against its wickedness, than gain its good-will by going down the stream with it.

(2.) He dismisses them, with a design to stay behind for some time in Galilee (v. 8): *Go you up to this feast, I go not up yet.*

[1.] He allows their going to the feast, though they were carnal and hypocritical in it. Note, Even those who go not to holy ordinances with right affections and sincere intentions must not be hindered nor discouraged from going; who knows but they may be wrought upon there? [2.] He denies them his company when they went to the feast, because they were carnal and hypocritical. Those who go to ordinances for ostentation, or to serve some secular purpose, go without Christ, and will speed accordingly. How sad is the condition of that man, though he reckon himself akin to Christ, to whom he saith, "*Go up to such an ordinance, Go pray, Go hear the word, Go receive the sacrament, but I go not up with thee? Go thou and appear before God, but I will not appear for thee*," as Exod. xxxiii. 1—3. But, if the presence of Christ go not with us, to what purpose should we go up? *Go you up, I go not up*. When we are going to, or coming from, solemn ordinances, it becomes us to be careful what company we *have and choose*, and to avoid that which is vain and carnal, lest the coal of good affections be quenched by corrupt communication. *I go not up yet to this feast*; he does not say, *I will not go up at all*, but not yet. There may be reasons for deferring a particular duty, which yet must not be wholly omitted or laid aside; see Num. ix. 6—11. The reason he gives is, *My time is not yet fully come*. Note, Our Lord Jesus is very exact and punctual in knowing and keeping his time, and, as it was the time *fixed*, so it was the *best* time.

3. Christ's continuance in Galilee till his *full time* was come, v. 9. He, saying these things to them (*ῥάβρα δὲ εἰπὼν*), *abode still in Galilee*; because of this discourse he continued there; for, (1.) He would not be influenced by those who advised him to seek honour from men, nor go along with those who put him upon making a figure; he would not seem to countenance the temptation. (2.) He would not depart from his own purpose. He had said, upon a clear foresight and mature deliberation, that he would not go up yet to this feast, and therefore he abode still in Galilee. It becomes the followers of Christ thus to be *steady*, and not to *use lightness*.

4. His going up to the feast when his time was come. Observe, (1.) *When he went: When his brethren were gone up*. He would not go up *with them*, lest they should make a noise and disturbance, under pretence of *showing him to the world*; whereas it agreed both with the prediction and with his spirit not to *strive nor cry*, nor let his *voice be heard in the streets*, Isa. xlii. 2. But he went up *after them*. We may lawfully join in the same religious worship with those with whom we should yet decline an intimate acquaintance and converse; for the blessing of ordinances depends upon the grace of God, and not upon the grace of our fellow-worshippers. His carnal brethren went up *first*, and then



he went. Note, In the external performances of religion it is possible that formal hypocrites may get the start of those that are sincere. Many come first to the temple who are brought thither by vain-glory, and go thence unjustified, as he, Luke xviii. 11. It is not, Who comes first? that will be the question, but, Who comes fittest? If we bring our hearts with us, it is no matter who gets before us. (2.) How he went, *ὡς ἐν κρυπτῷ*—as if he were hiding himself: not openly, but as it were in secret, rather for fear of giving offence than of receiving injury. He went up to the feast, because it was an opportunity of honouring God and doing good; but he went up as it were in secret, because he would not provoke the government. Note, Provided the work of God be done effectually, it is best done when done with least noise. The kingdom of God need not come with observation, Luke xvii. 20. We may do the work of God privately, and yet not do it deceitfully.

5. The great expectation that there was of him among the Jews at Jerusalem, v. 11—14. Having formerly come up to the feasts, and signalized himself by the miracles he wrought, he had made himself the subject of much discourse and observation.

(1.) They could not but think of him (v. 11): *The Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?* [1.] The common people longed to see him there, that they might have their curiosity gratified with the sight of his person and miracles. They did not think it worth while to go to him into Galilee, though if they had they would not have lost their labour, but they hoped the feast would bring him to Jerusalem, and then they should see him. If an opportunity of acquaintance with Christ come to their door, they can like it well enough. They sought him at the feast. When we attend upon God in his holy ordinances, we should seek Christ in them, seek him at the gospel feasts. Those who would see Christ at a feast must seek him there. Or, [2.] Perhaps it was his enemies that were thus waiting an opportunity to seize him, and, if possible, to put an effectual stop to his progress. They said, *Where is he?* *ποῦ ἔστιν ἰκεῖνος*—where is that fellow? Thus scornfully and contemptibly do they speak of him. Or it intimates how full their hearts were with thoughts of him, and their town with talk of him; they needed not name him. When they should have welcomed the feast as an opportunity of serving God, they were glad of it as an opportunity of persecuting Christ. Thus Saul hoped to slay David at the new moon, 1 Sam. xx. 27. Those who seek opportunity to sin in solemn assemblies for religious worship profane God's ordinances to the last degree, and defy him upon his own ground; it is like striking within the verge of the court.

(2.) The people differed much in their sentiments concerning him (v. 12): *There was much murmuring, or muttering rather, among*

*the people concerning him.* The enmity of the rulers against Christ, and their enquiries after him, caused him to be so much the more talked of and observed among the people. This ground the gospel of Christ has got by the opposition made to it, that it has been the more enquired into, and, by being every where spoken against, it has come to be every where spoken of, and by this means has been spread the further, and the merits of his cause have been the more searched into. This murmuring was not against Christ, but concerning him; some murmured at the rulers, because they did not countenance and encourage him: others murmured at them, because they did not silence and restrain him. Some murmured that he had so great an interest in Galilee; others, that he had so little interest in Jerusalem. Note, Christ and his religion have been, and will be, the subject of much controversy and debate, Luke xii. 51, 52. If all would agree to entertain Christ as they ought, there would be perfect peace; but, when some receive the light and others resolve against it, there will be murmuring. The bones in the valley, while they were dead and dry, lay quiet; but when it was said unto them, *Live*, there was a noise and a shaking, Ezek. xxxvii. 7. But the noise and rencounter of liberty and business are preferable, surely, to the silence and agreement of a prison. Now what were the sentiments of the people concerning him? [1.] Some said, *He is a good man.* This was a truth, but it was far short of being the whole truth. He was not only a good man, but more than a man, he was the Son of God. Many who have no ill thoughts of Christ have yet low thoughts of him, and scarcely honour him, even when they speak well of him, because they do not say enough; yet indeed it was his honour, and the reproach of those who persecuted him, that even those who would not believe him to be the Messiah could not but own he was a good man. [2.] Others said, *Nay, but he deceiveth the people*; if this had been true, he had been a very bad man. The doctrine he preached was sound, and could not be contested; his miracles were real, and could not be disproved; his conversation was manifestly holy and good; and yet it must be taken for granted, notwithstanding, that there was some undiscovered cheat at the bottom, because it was the interest of the chief priests to oppose him and run him down. Such murmuring as there was among the Jews concerning Christ there is still among us: the Socinians say, *He is a good man*, and further they say not; the deists will not allow this, but say, *He deceived the people.* Thus some depreciate him, others abuse him, but great is the truth. [3.] They were frightened by their superiors from speaking much of him (v. 13): *No man spoke openly of him, for fear of the Jews.* Either, First, They durst not openly speak well of him. While any one was at liberty to cen-



sure and reproach him, none durst vindicate him. Or, *Secondly*, They durst not speak at all of him openly. Because nothing could justly be said against him, they would not suffer any thing to be said of him. It was a crime to name him. Thus many have aimed to suppress truth, under colour of silencing disputes about it, and would have all talk of religion hushed, in hopes thereby to bury in oblivion religion itself.

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. 15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? 16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. 17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself. 18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. 19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? 20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? 21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. 22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers); and ye on the sabbath day circumsise a man. 23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? 24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. 25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? 26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? 27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. 28 Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and

I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. 29 But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. 30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. 31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done? 32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. 33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. 34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come. 35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? 36 What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come?

Here is, I, Christ's public preaching in the temple (v. 14): He *went up into the temple, and taught*, according to his custom when he was at Jerusalem. His business was to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and he did it in every place of concourse. His sermon is not recorded, because, probably, it was to the same purport with the sermons he had preached in Galilee, which were recorded by the other evangelists. For the gospel is the same to the *plain* and to the *polite*. But that which is observable here is that it was *about the midst of the feast*; the fourth or fifth day of the eight. Whether he did not come up to Jerusalem till the middle of the feast, or whether he came up at the beginning, but kept private till now, is not certain. But, *Query*, Why did he not go to the temple sooner, to preach? *Answer*, 1. Because the people would have more leisure to hear him, and, it might be hoped, would be better disposed to hear him, when they had spent some days in their booths, as they did at the feast of tabernacles. 2. Because he would choose to appear when both his friends and his enemies had done looking for him; and so give a specimen of the method he would observe in his appearances, which is to come at midnight Matt. xxv. 6. But why did he appear thus publicly now? Surely it was to *shame* his persecutors, the



chief priests and elders. (1.) By showing that, though they were very bitter against him, yet he did not fear them, nor their power. See Isa. l. 7, 8. (2.) By taking their work out of their hands. Their office was to teach the people in the temple, and particularly at the *feast of tabernacles*, Neh. viii. 17, 18. But they either did not teach them at all or taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and therefore he goes up to the temple and teaches the people. When the shepherds of Israel made a prey of the flock it was time for the chief Shepherd to appear, as was promised. Ezek. xxxiv. 22, 23; Mal. iii. 1.

II. His discourse with the Jews hereupon; and the conference is reducible to four heads:

1. Concerning his *doctrine*. See here,

(1.) How the Jews *admired* it (v. 15): *They marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* Observe here, [1.] That our Lord Jesus was not educated in the schools of the prophets, or at the feet of the rabbin; not only did not travel for learning, as the philosophers did, but did not make any use of the schools and academies in his own country. Moses was taught the learning of the Egyptians, but Christ was not taught so much as the learning of the Jews; having received the Spirit *without measure*, he needed not receive any knowledge *from man, or by man*. At the time of Christ's appearing, learning flourished both in the Roman empire and in the Jewish church more than in any age before or since, and in such a time of enquiry Christ chose to establish his religion, not in an illiterate age, lest it should look like a design to impose upon the world; yet he himself studied not the learning then in vogue. [2.] That Christ *had letters*, though he had never *learned* them; was mighty in the scriptures, though he never had any doctor of the law for his tutor. It is necessary that Christ's ministers should have *learning*, as he had; and since they cannot expect to have it as he had it, by inspiration, they must take pains to get it in an ordinary way. [3.] That Christ's having learning, though he had not been taught it, made him truly great and wonderful; the Jews speak of it here with wonder. *First*, Some, it is likely, took notice of it to his honour: He that had no human learning, and yet so far excelled all that had, certainly must be endued with a divine knowledge. *Secondly*, Others, probably, mentioned it in disparagement and contempt of him: Whatever he *seems* to have, he cannot really have any true learning, for he was never at the university, nor took his degree. *Thirdly*, Some perhaps suggested that he had got his learning by magic arts, or some unlawful means or other. Since they know not how he could be a scholar, they will think him a conjuror.

(2.) What he *asserted* concerning it; three things:—

[1.] That his *doctrine is divine* (v. 16): *My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me*. They were offended because he undertook to *teach* though he had never learned, in answer to which he tells them that his doctrine was such as was not to be *learned*, for it was not the product of *human thought* and natural powers enlarged and elevated by reading and conversation, but it was a *divine revelation*. As God, equal with the Father, he might truly have said, *My doctrine is mine, and his that sent me*; but being now in his estate of humiliation, and being, as Mediator, God's servant, it was more congruous to say, "*My doctrine is not mine, not mine only, nor mine originally, as man and mediator, but his that sent me*; it does not centre in myself, nor lead ultimately to myself, but to him that sent me." God had promised concerning the great prophet that he would *put his words into his mouth* (Deut. xviii. 18), to which Christ seems here to refer. Note, It is the comfort of those who embrace Christ's doctrine, and the condemnation of those who reject it, that it is a divine doctrine: it is of God and not of man.

[2.] That the most competent judges of the truth and divine authority of Christ's doctrine are those that with a sincere and upright heart desire and endeavour to do the will of God (v. 17): *If any man be willing to do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself*. Observe here, *First*, What the question is, concerning the doctrine of Christ, *whether it be of God or no*; whether the gospel be a divine revelation or an imposture. Christ himself was willing to have his doctrine enquired into, whether it were of God or no, much more should his ministers; and we are concerned to examine what grounds we go upon, for, if we be deceived, we are miserably deceived. *Secondly*, Who are likely to succeed in this search: those that *do the will of God*, at least are desirous to do it. Now see, 1. Who they are that *will do the will of God*. They are such as are *impartial* in their enquiries concerning the will of God, and are not biassed by any lust or interest, and such as are resolved by the grace of God, when they find out what the will of God is, to conform to it. They are such as have an honest principle of regard to God, and are truly desirous to glorify and please him. 2. Whence it is that such a one shall know of the truth of Christ's doctrine. (1.) Christ has promised to *give knowledge* to such; he hath said, *He shall know*, and he can give an understanding. Those who improve the light they have, and carefully live up to it, shall be secured by divine grace from destructive mistakes. (2.) They are disposed and prepared to *receive* that knowledge. He that is inclined to submit to the rules of the divine law is disposed to admit the rays of divine light. *To him that has shall be given*; those have a *good understanding* that *do his*

commandments, Ps. cxi. 10. Those who resemble God are most likely to understand him.

[3.] That hereby it appeared that Christ, as a teacher, did not speak of himself, because he did not seek himself, v. 18. *First*, See here the character of a deceiver: he *seeketh his own glory*, which is a sign that he *speaks of himself*, as the false Christs and false prophets did. Here is the description of the cheat: they *speaking of themselves*, and have no commission nor instructions from God; no warrant but their own will, no inspiration but their own imagination, their own policy and artifice. Ambassadors *speaking not of themselves*; those ministers disclaim that character who glory in this that they *speaking of themselves*. But see the discovery of the cheat; by this their pretensions are disproved, they consult purely *their own glory*; self-seekers are self-speakers. Those who speak from God will speak for God, and for his glory; those who aim at their own preferment and interest make it to appear that they had no commission from God. *Secondly*, See the contrary character Christ gives of himself and his doctrine: *He that seeks his glory that sent him*, as I do, makes it to appear that *he is true*. 1. He was sent of God. Those teachers, and those only, who are sent of God, are to be received and entertained by us. Those who bring a divine message must prove a divine mission, either by special revelation or by regular institution. 2. He sought the glory of God. It was both the tendency of his doctrine and the tenour of his whole conversation to glorify God. 3. This was a proof that he was true, and there was no unrighteousness in him. False teachers are most unrighteous; they are unjust to God whose name they abuse, and unjust to the souls of men whom they impose upon. There cannot be a greater piece of unrighteousness than this. But Christ made it appear that he was true, that he was really what he said he was, that there was no unrighteousness in him, no falsehood in his doctrine, no fallacy nor fraud in his dealings with us.

2. They discourse concerning the crime that was laid to his charge for curing the impotent man, and bidding him carry his bed on the sabbath day, for which they had formerly prosecuted him, and which was still the pretence of their enmity to him.

(1.) He argues against them by way of *recrimination*, convicting them of far worse practices, v. 19. How could they for shame censure him for a breach of the law of Moses, when they themselves were such notorious breakers of it? *Did not Moses give you the law?* And it was their privilege that they had the law, no nation had such a law; but it was their wickedness that none of them kept the law, that they rebelled against it, and lived contrary to it. Many that have the law given them, when they have it do not keep it. Their neglect of the law was uni-

versal. *None of you keepeth it*: neither those of them that were in *posts of honour*, who should have been most knowing, nor those who were in *posts of subjection*, who should have been most obedient. They boasted of the law, and pretended a zeal for it, and were enraged at Christ for seeming to transgress it, and yet none of them kept it; like those who say that they are for the church, and yet never go to church. It was an aggravation of their wickedness, in persecuting Christ for breaking the law, that they themselves did not keep it: "*None of you keepeth the law*, why then go ye about to kill me for not keeping it?" Note, Those are commonly most censorious of others who are most faulty themselves. Thus hypocrites, who are forward to pull a mote out of their brother's eye, are not aware of a beam in their own. *Why go ye about to kill me?* Some take this as the evidence of their not keeping the law: "*You keep not the law*; if you did, you would understand yourselves better than to go about to kill me for doing a good work." Those that support themselves and their interest by persecution and violence, whatever they pretend (though they may call themselves *custodes utriusque tabulae*—the guardians of both tables), are not keepers of the law of God. Chemnitius understands this as a reason why it was time to supersede the law of Moses by the gospel, because the law was found insufficient to restrain sin: "*Moses gave you the law, but you do not keep it, nor are kept by it from the greatest wickedness*; there is therefore need of a clearer light and better law to be brought in; why then do you aim to kill me for introducing it?"

Here the people rudely interrupted him in his discourse, and contradicted what he said (v. 20): *Thou hast a devil; who goes about to kill thee?* This intimates, [1.] The good opinion they had of their rulers, who, they think, would never attempt so atrocious a thing as to kill him; no, such a veneration they had for their elders and chief priests that they would swear for them they would do no harm to an innocent man. Probably the rulers had their little emissaries among the people who suggested this to them; many deny that wickedness which at the same time they are contriving. [2.] The ill opinion they had of our Lord Jesus: "*Thou hast a devil*, thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and art a bad man for saying so; so some: or rather, "*Thou art melancholy, and art a weak man*; thou frightenest thyself with causeless fears, as hypochondriacal people are apt to do." Not only open frenzies, but silent melancholies, were then commonly imputed to the power of Satan. "*Thou art crazed, hast a distempered brain*." Let us not think it strange if the best of men are put under the worst of characters. To this vile calumny our Saviour returns no direct answer, but seems as if he took no notice of



it. Note, Those who would be like Christ must put up with affronts, and pass by the indignities and injuries done them; must not regard them, much less resent them, and least of all revenge them. *I, as a deaf man, heard not.* When Christ was reviled, he reviled not again.

(2.) He argues by way of appeal and vindication.

[1.] He appeals to *their own sentiments* of this miracle: "*I have done one work, and you all marvel, v. 21.* You cannot choose but marvel at it as truly great, and altogether supernatural; you must all own it to be marvellous." Or, "Though I have done but *one work* that you have any colour to find fault with, yet you marvel, you are offended and displeased as if I had been guilty of some heinous or enormous crime."

[2.] He appeals to *their own practice* in other instances: "*I have done one work on the sabbath, and it was done easily, with a word's speaking, and you all marvel, you make a mighty strange thing of it, that a religious man should dare do such a thing, whereas you yourselves many a time do that which is a much more servile work on the sabbath day, in the case of circumcision; if it be lawful for you, nay, and your duty, to circumcise a child on the sabbath day, when it happens to be the eighth day, as no doubt it is, much more was it lawful and good for me to heal a diseased man on that day.*"

Observe,

*First,* The rise and origin of circumcision: *Moses gave you circumcision, gave you the law concerning it.* Here, 1. Circumcision is said to be given, and (v. 23) they are said to receive it; it was not imposed upon them as a yoke, but conferred upon them as a favour. Note, The ordinances of God, and particularly those which are seals of the covenant, are gifts given to men, and are to be received as such. 2. Moses is said to give it, because it was a part of that law which was given by Moses; yet, as Christ said of the manna (ch. vi. 32), Moses did not give it them, but God; nay, and it was not of Moses first, but of the fathers, v. 22. Though it was incorporated into the Mosaic institution, yet it was ordained long before, for it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and therefore commenced with the promise four hundred and thirty years before, Gal. iii. 17. The church-membership of believers and their seed was not of Moses or his law, and therefore did not fall with it; but was of the fathers, belonged to the patriarchal church, and was part of that blessing of Abraham which was to come upon the Gentiles, Gal. iii. 14.

*Secondly,* The respect paid to the law of circumcision above that of the sabbath, in the constant practice of the Jewish church. The Jewish casuists frequently take notice of it, *Circumcisio et ejus sanatio pellit sabbatum*—Circumcision and its cure drive away the sabbath; so that if a child was born one sab-

bath day it was without fail circumcised the next. If then, when the sabbath rest was more strictly insisted on, yet those works were allowed which were in *ordine ad spiritualia*—for the keeping up of religion, much more are they allowed now under the gospel, when the stress is laid more upon the sabbath work.

*Thirdly,* The inference Christ draws hence in justification of himself, and of what he had done (v. 23): *A man-child on the sabbath day receives circumcision, that the law of circumcision might not be broken;* or, as the margin reads it, *without breaking the law,* namely, of the sabbath. Divine commands must be construed so as to agree with each other. "Now, if this be allowed by yourselves, how unreasonable are you, who are angry with me because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day!" ἐμοὶ χολᾶτε. The word is used only here, from χολῆ—fel, gall. They were angry at him with the greatest indignation; it was a spiteful anger, anger with gall in it. Note, It is very absurd and unreasonable for us to condemn others for that in which we justify ourselves. Observe the comparison Christ here makes between their circumcising a child and his healing a man on the sabbath day. 1. Circumcision was but a ceremonial institution; it was of the fathers indeed, but not from the beginning; but what Christ did was a good work by the law of nature, a more excellent law than that which made circumcision a good work. 2. Circumcision was a bloody ordinance, and made sore; but what Christ did was healing, and made whole. The law works pain, and, if that work may be done on the sabbath day, much more a gospel work, which produces peace. 3. Especially considering that whereas, when they had circumcised a child, their care was only to heal up that part which was circumcised, which might be done and yet the child remain under other illnesses, Christ had made this man every whit whole, ὅλον ἄνθρωπον ὑγιῆ—I have made the whole man healthful and sound. The whole body was healed, for the disease affected the whole body; and it was a perfect cure, such as left no relics of the disease behind; nay, Christ not only healed his body, but his soul too, by that admonition, *Go, and sin no more,* and so indeed made the whole man sound, for the soul is the man. Circumcision indeed was intended for the good of the soul, and to make the whole man as it should be; but they had perverted it, and turned it into a mere carnal ordinance; but Christ accompanied his outward cures with inward grace, and so made them sacramental, and healed the whole man.

He concludes this argument with that rule (v. 24): *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.* This may be applied, either, *First,* In particular, to this work which they quarrelled with as a violation



of the law. Be not partial in your judgment; judge not, *kar' ôlûv—with respect of persons*; knowing faces, as the Hebrew phrase is, Deut. i. 17. It is contrary to the law of justice, as well as charity, to censure those who differ in opinion from us as transgressors, in taking that liberty which yet in those of our own party, and way, and opinion, we allow of; as it is also to commend that in some as necessary strictness and severity which in others we condemn as imposition and persecution. Or, *Secondly*, In general, to Christ's person and preaching, which they were offended at and prejudiced against. Those things that are false, and designed to impose upon men, commonly appear best when they are judged of *according to the outward appearance*, they appear most plausible *prima facie—at the first glance*. It was this that gained the Pharisees such an interest and reputation, that they *appeared right* unto men (Matt. xxiii. 27, 28), and men judged of them by that appearance, and so were sadly mistaken in them. "But," saith Christ, "be not too confident that all are real saints who are seeming ones." With reference to himself, his *outward appearance* was far short of his real dignity and excellency, for he took upon him the *form of a servant* (Phil. ii. 7), was in the *likeness of sinful flesh* (Rom. viii. 3), had *no form nor comeliness*, Isa. liii. 2. So that those who undertook to judge whether he was the Son of God or no by his *outward appearance* were not likely to *judge righteous judgment*. The Jews expected the outward appearance of the Messiah to be pompous and magnificent, and attended with all the ceremonies of secular grandeur; and, judging of Christ by that rule, their judgment was from first to last a *continual* mistake, for the kingdom of Christ was not to be *of this world*, nor to *come with observation*. If a divine power accompanied him, and God bore him witness, and the scriptures were fulfilled in him, though his appearance was ever so mean, they ought to receive him, and to judge by faith, and not by the sight of the eye. See Isa. xi. 3, and 1 Sam. xvi. 7. Christ and his doctrine and doings desire nothing but *righteous judgment*; if truth and justice may but pass the sentence, Christ and his cause will carry the day. We must not judge concerning any by their *outward appearance*, not by their titles, the figure they make in the world, and their fluttering show, but by their intrinsic worth, and the gifts and graces of God's Spirit in them.

3. Christ discourses with them here concerning *himself*, whence he came, and whither he was going, v. 25—36.

(1.) *Whence he came*, v. 25—31 In the account of this observe,

[1.] The objection concerning this stated by some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who seem to have been of all others most prejudiced against him, v. 25. One would think that those who lived at the fountain-head of

knowledge and religion should have been most ready to receive the Messiah: but it proved quite contrary. Those that have plenty of the means of knowledge and grace, if they are not *made better* by them, are commonly *made worse*; and our Lord Jesus has often met with the least welcome from those that one would expect the best from. But it was not without some just cause that it came into a proverb, *The nearer the church the further from God*. These people of Jerusalem showed their ill-will to Christ,

*First*, By their reflecting on the rulers, because they let him alone: *Is not this he whom they seek to kill?* The multitude of the people that came up out of the country to the feast did not suspect there was any design on foot against him, and therefore they said, *Who goes about to kill thee?* v. 20. But those of Jerusalem knew the plot, and irritated their rulers to put it into execution: "*Is not this he whom they seek to kill?* Why do they not do it then? Who hinders them? They say that they have a mind to get him out of the way, and yet, lo, *he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him*; do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" v. 26. Here they slyly and maliciously insinuate two things, to exasperate the rulers against Christ, when indeed they needed no spur.

1. That by conniving at his preaching they brought their authority into contempt. "Must a man that is condemned by the *sanhedrim* as a deceiver be permitted to *speak boldly*, without any check or contradiction? This makes their sentence to be but *brutem fulmen—a vain menace*; if our rulers will suffer themselves to be thus trampled upon, they may thank themselves if none stand in awe of them and their laws." Note, The worst of persecutions have often been carried on under colour of the necessary support of authority and government. 2. That hereby they brought their judgment into suspicion: *Do they know that this is the Christ?* It is spoken ironically. "How came they to change their mind? What new discovery have they lighted on? They give people occasion to think that they believe him to be the Christ, and it behoves them to act vigorously against him to clear themselves from the suspicion." Thus the rulers, who had made the people enemies to Christ, made them *seven times more the children of hell than themselves*, Matt. xxiii. 15. When religion and the profession of Christ's name are out of *fashion*, and consequently out of *repute*, many are strongly tempted to persecute and oppose them, only that they may not be thought to favour them and incline to them. And for this reason apostates, and the degenerate offspring of good parents, have been sometimes worse than others, as it were to wipe off the stain of their profession. It was strange that the rulers, thus irritated, did not seize Christ; but his hour was not yet come; and God can tie men's hands to



admiration, though he should not turn their hearts.

*Secondly*, By their exception against his being the Christ, in which appeared more malice than matter, v. 27. "If the rulers think him to be the Christ, we neither can nor will believe him to be so, for we have this argument against it, that *we know this man, whence he is; but when Christ comes no man knows whence he is.*" Here is a fallacy in the argument, for the propositions are not both *ad idem*—*adapted to the same view of the subject*. 1. If they speak of his *divine nature*, it is true that when Christ comes *no man knows whence he is*, for he is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was *without descent, and his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*, Mic. v. 2. But then it is not true that as for this man they knew whence he was, for they knew not his divine nature, nor how *the Word was made flesh*. 2. If they speak of his *human nature*, it is true that they knew whence he was, who was his mother, and where he was bred up; but then it is false that ever it was said of the Messiah that none should know whence he was, for it was known before *where he should be born*, Matt. ii. 4, 5. Observe, (1.) How they *despised him*, because they knew *whence he was*. Familiarity breeds contempt, and we are apt to disdain the use of those whom we know the *rise of*. Christ's own received him not, because he was *their own*, for which very reason they should the rather have loved him, and been thankful that their nation and their age were honoured with his appearance. (2.) How they endeavoured unjustly to fasten the ground of their prejudice upon the scriptures, as if they countenanced them, when there was no such thing. *Therefore people err concerning Christ, because they know not the scripture.*

[2.] Christ's answer to this objection, v. 28, 29.

*First*, He spoke freely and boldly, he *cried in the temple, as he taught*, he spoke this louder than the rest of his discourse, 1. To express his earnestness, being *grieved for the hardness of their hearts*. There may be a vehemency in contending for the truth where yet there is no intemperate heat nor passion. We may instruct gainsayers with warmth, and yet with *meekness*. 2. The priests and those that were prejudiced against him, did not come near enough to hear his preaching, and therefore he must speak louder than ordinary what he will have them to hear. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear this.

*Secondly*, His answer to their cavil is, 1. By way of *concession*, granting that they did or might know his origin as to the flesh: "*You both know me, and you know whence I am. You know I am of your own nation, and one of yourselves.*" It is no disparagement to the doctrine of Christ that there is that in it which is level to the capacities of the meanest, plain truths, discovered even by

nature's light, of which we may say, *We know whence they are.* "*You know me*, you think you know me; but you are mistaken; you take me to be the carpenter's son, and born at Nazareth, but it is not so." 2. By way of *negation*, denying that that which they did see in him, and know of him, was all that was to be known; and therefore, if they looked no further, they judged by the outward appearance only. They knew *whence* he came perhaps, and *where* he had his birth, but he will tell them what they knew not, *from whom* he came. (1.) That he did not *come of himself*; that he did not run without sending, nor come as a private person, but with a public character. (2.) That he was sent of his Father; this is twice mentioned. *He hath sent me.* And again, "*He hath sent me*, to say what I say, and do what I do." This he was himself well assured of, and therefore knew that his Father would bear him out; and it is well for us that we are assured of it too, that we may with holy confidence go to God by him. (3.) That he was *from his Father*, *παρ αὐτοῦ εἰμι*—*I am from him*; not only sent from him as a servant from his master, but from him by eternal generation, as a son from his father, by essential emanation, as the beams from the sun. (4.) *That the Father who sent him is true*; he had promised to give the Messiah, and though the Jews had forfeited the promise, yet he that made the promise is *true*, and has performed it. He had promised that the Messiah should see his seed, and be successful in his undertaking; and, though the generality of the Jews reject him and his gospel, yet he *is true*, and will fulfil the promise in the calling of the Gentiles. (5.) That these unbelieving Jews did *not know the Father*: *He that sent me, whom you know not.* There is much ignorance of God even with many that have a *form of knowledge*; and the true reason why people reject Christ is because they do not *know God*; for there is such a harmony of the divine attributes in the work of redemption, and such an admirable agreement between natural and revealed religion, that the right knowledge of the former would not only admit, but introduce, the latter. (6.) Our Lord Jesus was intimately acquainted with the Father that *sent him*: *but I know him.* He knew him so well that he was not at all *in doubt* concerning his mission from him, but perfectly *assured* of it; nor at all *in the dark* concerning the work he had to do, but perfectly *apprized* of it, Matt. xi. 27.

[3.] The provocation which this gave to his enemies, who hated him because he *told them the truth*, v. 30. *They sought therefore to take him*, to lay violent hands on him, not only to do him a mischief, but some way or other to be the death of him; but by the restraint of an invisible power it was prevented; nobody touched him, *because his hour was not yet come*; this was not their reason why

they did it not, but God's reason why he hindered them from doing it. Note, *First*, The faithful preachers of the truths of God, though they behave themselves with ever so much prudence and meekness, must expect to be hated and persecuted by those who think themselves tormented by their testimony, Rev. xi. 10. *Secondly*, God has wicked men in a chain, and, whatever mischief they would do, they can do no more than God will suffer them to do. The malice of persecutors is *impotent* even when it is most *impetuous*, and, when Satan fills their hearts, yet God ties their hands. *Thirdly*, God's servants are sometimes wonderfully protected by indiscernible unaccountable means. Their enemies do not do the mischief they designed, and yet neither they themselves nor any one else can tell why they do not. *Fourthly*, Christ had his hour set, which was to put a period to his day and work on earth; so have all his people and all his ministers, and, till that hour comes, the attempts of their enemies against them are ineffectual, and their day shall be lengthened as long as their Master has any work for them to do; nor can all the powers of hell and earth prevail against them, until they have finished their testimony.

[4.] The good effect which Christ's discourse had, notwithstanding this, upon some of his hearers (v. 31): *Many of the people believed on him*. As he was set for the fall of some, so for the rising again of others. Even where the gospel meets with opposition there may yet be a great deal of good done, 1 Thess. ii. 2. Observe here, *First*, Who they were that believed; not a few, but many, more than one would have expected when the stream ran so strongly the other way. But these many were of the people, ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου—of the multitude, the crowd, the inferior sort, the mob, the rabble, some would have called them. We must not measure the prosperity of the gospel by its success among the great ones; nor must ministers say that they labour in vain, though none but the poor, and those of no figure, receive the gospel, 1 Cor. i. 26. *Secondly*, What induced them to believe: the miracles which he did, which were not only the accomplishment of the Old-Testament prophecies (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6), but an argument of a divine power. He that had an ability to do that which none but God can do, to control and overrule the powers of nature, no doubt had authority to enact that which none but God can enact, a law that shall bind conscience, and a covenant that shall give life. *Thirdly*, How weak their faith was: they do not positively assert, as the Samaritans did, *This is indeed the Christ*, but they only argue, *When Christ comes will he do more miracles than these?* They take it for granted that Christ will come, and, when he comes, will do many miracles. "Is not this he then? In him we see, though not all the worldly pomp we

have fancied, yet all the divine power we have believed the Messiah should appear in; and therefore why may not this be he?" They believe it, but have not courage to own it. Note, Even weak faith may be true faith, and so accounted, so accepted, by the Lord Jesus, who despises not the day of small things.

(2.) *Whither he was going*, v. 32—36. Here observe,

[1.] The design of the Pharisees and chief priests against him, v. 32. *First*, The provocation given them was that they had information brought them by their spies, who insinuated themselves into the conversation of the people, and gathered stories to carry to their jealous masters, that the people murmured such things concerning him, that there were many who had a respect and value for him, notwithstanding all they had done to render him odious. Though the people did but whisper these things, and had not courage to speak out, yet the Pharisees were enraged at it. The equity of that government is justly suspected by others which is so suspicious of itself as to take notice of, or be influenced by, the secret, various, uncertain mutterings of the common people. The Pharisees valued themselves very much upon the respect of the people, and were sensible that if Christ did thus increase they must decrease. *Secondly*, The project they laid hereupon was to seize Jesus, and take him into custody: *They sent officers to take him* not to take up those who murmured concerning him and frighten them; no, the most effectual way to disperse the flock is to smite the shepherd. The Pharisees seem to have been the ringleaders in this prosecution, but they, as such, had no power, and therefore they got the chief priests, the judges of the ecclesiastical court, to join with them, who were ready enough to do so. The Pharisees were the great pretenders to learning, and the chief priests to sanctity. As the world by wisdom knew not God, but the greatest philosophers were guilty of the greatest blunders in natural religion, so the Jewish church by their wisdom knew not Christ, but their greatest rabbins were the greatest fools concerning him, nay, they were the most inveterate enemies to him. Those wicked rulers had their officers, officers of their court, church-officers, whom they employed to take Christ, and who were ready to go on their errand, though it was an ill errand. If Saul's footmen will not turn and fall upon the priests of the Lord, he has a herdsman that will, 1 Sam xxii. 17, 18.

[2.] The discourse of our Lord Jesus hereupon (v. 33, 34): *Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to him that sent me; you shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither you cannot come*. These words, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a bright side and a dark side.

*First*, They have a bright side towards



our Lord Jesus himself, and speak abundance of comfort to him and all his faithful followers that are exposed to difficulties and dangers for his sake. Three things Christ here comforted himself with:—1. That he had but a little time to continue here in this troublesome world. He sees that he is never likely to have a quiet day among them; but the best of it is his warfare will shortly be accomplished, and then he shall be *no more in this world* ch. xvii. 11. Whomsoever we are *with* in this world, friends or foes, it is but a little while that we shall be with them; and it is a matter of comfort to those who are *in* the world, but not *of* it, and therefore are hated by it and sick of it, that they shall not be *in it always*, they shall not be *in it long*. We must be *awhile* with those that are pricking briars and grieving thorns; but thanks be to God, it is but a little while, and we shall be out of their reach. Our days being *evil*, it is well they are *few*. 2. That, when he should quit this troublesome world, he should *go to him that sent him; I go*. Not, “I am driven away by force,” but, “I voluntarily go; having finished my embassy, I return to him on whose errand I came. When I have done my work with you, then, and not till then, I go to him that sent me, and will receive me, will prefer me, as ambassadors are preferred when they return.” Their rage against him would not only not hinder him from, but would hasten him to the glory and joy that were set before him. Let those who suffer for Christ comfort themselves with this, that they have a God to go to, and are going to him, going apace, to be for ever with him. 3. That, though they persecuted him here, wherever he went, yet none of their persecutions could follow him to heaven: *You shall seek me, and shall not find me*. It appears, by their enmity to his followers when he was gone, that if they could have reached him they would have persecuted him: “But you cannot enter into that temple as you do into this.” *Where I am*, that is, where I then *shall be*; but he expresses it thus because, even when he was on earth, by his divine nature and divine affections he was in heaven, ch. iii. 13. Or it denotes that he should be *so soon* there that he was as good as there already. Note, It adds to the happiness of glorified saints that they are out of the reach of the devil and all his wicked instruments.

*Secondly*, These words have a *black and dark side* towards those wicked Jews that hated and persecuted Christ. They now longed to be rid of him, *Away with him from the earth*; but let them know, 1. That according to their choice so shall their doom be. They were industrious to *drive him* from them, and their sin shall be their punishment; he will not trouble them long, yet a little while and he will *depart* from them. It is just with God to forsake those that think his presence a burden. They

that are weary of Christ need no more to make them miserable than to have *their wish*. 2. That they would certainly repent their choice when it was too late. (1.) They should in vain seek the presence of the Messiah: “*You shall seek me, and shall not find me*. You shall expect the *Christ to come*, but your eyes shall fail with looking for him, and you shall never find him.” Those who rejected the true Messiah when he did come were justly abandoned to a miserable and endless expectation of one that should never come. Or, it may refer to the final rejection of sinners from the favours and grace of Christ at the great day: those who now seek Christ shall find him, but the day is coming when those who now refuse him *shall seek him, and shall not find him*. See Prov. i. 28. They will in vain cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Or, perhaps, these words might be fulfilled in the despair of some of the Jews, who possibly might be convinced and not converted, who would wish in vain to see Christ, and to hear him preach again; but the day of grace is over (Luke xvii. 22); yet this is not all. (2.) They should in vain expect a place in heaven. *Where I am*, and where all believers shall be with me, *thither ye cannot come*. Not only because they are *excluded* by the just and irreversible sentence of the judge, and the sword of the angel at every gate of the new Jerusalem, to keep *the way of the tree of life* against those who have *no right to enter* but because they are disabled by their own iniquity and infidelity: *You cannot come*, because you *will not*. Those who hate to be where Christ is, in his word and ordinances on earth, are very unfit to be where he is in his glory in heaven; for indeed heaven would be no heaven to them, such are the antipathies of an unsanctified soul to the felicities of that state.

[3.] Their descant upon this discourse (v. 35, 36): *They said among themselves, Whither will he go?* See here, *First*, Their wilful ignorance and blindness. He had expressly said whither he would go—to him that sent him, to his Father in heaven, and yet they ask, *Whither will he go?* and, *What manner of saying is this?* None so blind as those that will not see, that will not heed. Christ’s sayings are *plain to him that understandeth*, and difficult only to those that are disposed to quarrel. *Secondly*, Their daring contempt of Christ’s threatenings. Instead of trembling at that terrible word, *You shall seek me, and not find me*, which denotes the utmost degree of misery, they banter it and make a jest of it, as those sinners that *mock at fear, and are not affrighted* Isa. v. 19; Amos v. 18. *Let him make speed. But be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.* *Thirdly*, Their inveterate malice and rage against Christ. All they dreaded in his *departure* was that he would be out of the reach of their power: “*Whither will he go, that we shall not find him?* If he be above ground,



we will have him; we will leave no place unsearched," as Ahab in quest of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 10. *Fourthly*, Their proud disdain of the Gentiles, whom they here call the *dispersed of the Gentiles*; meaning either the Jews that were scattered abroad among the Greeks (James i. 1; 1 Pet. i. 1); will he go and make an interest among those silly people? or, the Gentiles *dispersed* over the world, in distinction from the Jews, who were *incorporated* into one church and nation; will he make his court to them? *Fifthly*, Their jealousy of the least intimation of favour to the Gentiles: "Will he go and *teach the Gentiles*? Will he carry his doctrine to them?" Perhaps they had heard of some items of respect shown by him to the Gentiles, as in his sermon at Nazareth, and in the case of the centurion and the woman of Canaan, and there was nothing they dreaded more than the *comprehension* of the Gentiles. So common is it for those who have lost the power of religion to be very jealous for the monopoly of the name. They now made a *jest* of his going to *teach the Gentiles*; but not long after he did it in good earnest by his apostles and ministers, and gathered those *dispersed* people, sorely to the grief of the Jews, Rom. x. 19. So true is that of Solomon, *The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him.*

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) 40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the prophet. 41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? 42 Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? 43 So there was a division among the people because of him. 44 And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

In these verses we have,

I. Christ's discourse, with the explication of it, v. 37—39. It is probable that these are only short hints of what he enlarged upon,

but they have in them the substance of the whole gospel; here is a *gospel invitation* to come to Christ, and a *gospel promise* of comfort and happiness in him. Now observe,

1. *When* he gave this invitation: *On the last day* of the feast of tabernacles, *that great day*. The *eighth day*, which concluded that solemnity, was to be a *holy convocation*, Lev. xxiii. 36. Now on this day Christ published this gospel-call, because, (1.) Much people were gathered together, and, if the invitation were given to *many*, it might be hoped that *some* would accept of it, Prov. i. 20. Numerous assemblies give opportunity of doing the more good. (2.) The people were now returning to their homes, and he would give them this to carry away with them as his parting word. When a great congregation is to be dismissed, and is about to scatter, as here, it is affecting to think that in all probability they will never come all together again in this world, and therefore, if we can say or do any thing to help them to heaven, that must be the time. It is good to be lively at the close of an ordinance. Christ made this offer *on the last day of the feast*, [1.] To those who had turned a deaf ear to his preaching on the foregoing days of this sacred week; he will try them once more, and, if they will yet hear his voice, they shall live. [2.] To those who perhaps might never have such another offer made them, and therefore were concerned to accept of this; it would be half a year before there would be another feast, and in that time they would many of them be in their graves. *Behold now is the accepted time.*

2. *How* he gave this invitation: *Jesus stood and cried*, which denotes, (1.) His great earnestness and importunity. His heart was upon it, to bring poor souls in to himself. The erection of his body and the elevation of his voice were indications of the intense-ness of his mind. Love to souls will make preachers lively. (2.) His desire that all might take notice, and take hold of this invitation. He *stood, and cried*, that he might the better be heard; for this is what every one that hath ears is concerned to hear. Gospel truth seeks no corners, because it fears no trials. The heathen oracles were delivered privately by them that *peeped and muttered*; but the oracles of the gospel were proclaimed by one that *stood, and cried*. How sad is the case of man, that he must be *importuned* to be happy, and how wonderful the grace of Christ, that he will *importune* him! *Ho, every one*, Isa. lv. 1.

3. The invitation itself is very general: *If any man thirst*, whoever he be, he is invited to Christ, be he high or low, rich or poor, young or old, bond or free, Jew or Gentile. It is also very *gracious*: "*If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink*. If any man desires to be truly and eternally happy, let him apply himself to me, and be ruled by me, and I will undertake to make him so."



(1.) The persons invited are such as *thirst*, which may be understood, either, [1.] Of the *indigence* of their cases; either as to their *outward* condition (if any man be destitute of the comforts of this life, or fatigued with the crosses of it, let his poverty and afflictions draw him to Christ for that peace which the world can neither give nor take away), or as to their *inward* state: "If any man want spiritual blessings, he may be supplied by me." Or, [2.] Of the *inclination* of their souls and their desires towards a spiritual happiness. If any man hunger and thirst after righteousness, that is, truly desire the good will of God towards him, and the good work of God in him.

(2.) The invitation itself: *Let him come to me*. Let him not go to the ceremonial law, which would neither *pacify* the conscience nor *purify* it, and therefore could not make the *comers thereunto perfect*, Heb. x. 1. Nor let him go to the heathen philosophy, which does but beguile men, lead them into a wood, and leave them there; but let him *go to Christ*, admit his doctrine, submit to his discipline, believe in him; come to him as the fountain of living waters, the giver of all comfort.

(3.) The satisfaction promised: Let him come and drink, he shall have what he comes for, and abundantly more, shall have that which will not only *refresh*, but *replenish*, a soul that desires to be happy."

4. A gracious promise annexed to this gracious call (v. 38): *He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow*—(1.) See here what it is to come to Christ: It is to *believe on him*, as the scripture hath said; it is to receive and entertain him as he is offered to us in the gospel. We must not frame a Christ according to our fancy, but believe in a Christ according to the scripture. (2.) See how thirsty souls, that come to Christ, shall be made to *drink*. Israel, that believed Moses, drank of the *rock that followed them*, the streams followed; but believers drink of a *rock in them, Christ in them*; he is in them a *well of living water*, ch. iv. 14. Provision is made not only for their *present* satisfaction, but for their *continual* perpetual comfort. Here is, [1.] *Living water*, running water, which the Hebrew language calls *living*, because still in motion. The graces and comforts of the Spirit are compared to *living* (meaning *running*) water, because they are the active quickening principles of spiritual life, and the earnest and beginnings of eternal life. See Jer. ii. 13. [2.] *Rivers* of living water, denoting both plenty and constancy. The comfort flows in both *plentifully* and *constantly* as a river; strong as a stream to bear down the oppositions of doubts and fears. There is a fulness in Christ of grace for grace. [3.] These flow *out of his belly*, that is, out of his heart or soul, which is the subject of the Spirit's working and the seat of his government.

There *gracious principles* are planted; and out of the heart, in which the Spirit dwells, flow the *issues of life*, Prov. iv. 23. There divine comforts are lodged, and the joy that a *stranger* doth not intermeddle with. *He that believes has the witness in himself*, 1 John v. 10. *Sat lucis intus—Light abounds within*. Observe, further, where there are *springs* of grace and comfort in the soul they will *send forth streams*: *Out of his belly shall flow rivers*. First, Grace and comfort will evidence themselves. Good affections will produce good actions, and a holy heart will be seen in a holy life; the tree is known by its fruits, and the fountain by its streams. Secondly, They will *communicate themselves* for the benefit of others; a good man is a common good. His *mouth* is a *well of life*, Prov. x. 11. It is not enough that we *drink waters out of our own cistern*, that we ourselves take the comfort of the grace given us, but we must let our *fountains* be *dispersed abroad*, Prov. v. 15, 16.

Those words, as the scripture hath said, seem to refer to some promise in the Old Testament to this purport, and there are many; as that God would *pour out* his Spirit, which is a metaphor borrowed from waters (Prov. i. 23; Joel ii. 28; Isa. xlv. 3; Zech. xii. 10); that the *dry land* should become *springs of water* (Isa. xli. 18); that there should be *rivers in the desert* (Isa. xliii. 19); that gracious souls should be like a *spring of water* (Isa. lviii. 11); and the church a *well of living water*, Cant. iv. 15. And here may be an allusion to the waters issuing out of Ezekiel's temple, Ezek. xlvii. 1. Compare Rev. xxii. 1, and see Zech. xiv. 8. Dr. Lightfoot and others tell us it was a custom of the Jews, which they received by tradition, the *last day of the feast* of tabernacles to have a solemnity, which they called *Libatio aquæ—The pouring out of water*. They fetched a golden vessel of water from the pool of Siloam, brought it into the temple with sound of trumpet and other ceremonies, and, upon the ascent to the altar, poured it out before the Lord with all possible expressions of joy. Some of their writers make the water to signify *the law*, and refer to Isa. xii. 3; lv. 1. Others, *the Holy Spirit*. And it is thought that our Saviour might here allude to this custom. Believers shall have the comfort, not of a vessel of water fetched from a pool, but of a river flowing from themselves. The joy of the law, and the pouring out of the water, which signified this, are not to be compared with the joy of the gospel in the wells of salvation.

5. Here is the evangelist's exposition of this promise (v. 39): *This spoke he of the Spirit*: not of any outward advantages accruing to believers (as perhaps some misunderstood him), but of the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Spirit. See how scripture is the best interpreter of scripture. Observe,

(1.) It is promised to *all that believe on*

Christ that they shall receive the *Holy Ghost*. Some received his miraculous gifts (Mark xvi. 17, 18); all receive his sanctifying graces. The gift of the Holy Ghost is one of the great blessings promised in the new covenant (Acts ii. 39), and, if *promised*, no doubt performed to all that have an interest in that covenant.

(2.) The Spirit dwelling and working in believers is as a *fountain of living* running water, out of which plentiful streams flow, cooling and cleansing as water, mollifying and moistening as water, making them fruitful, and others joyful; see *ch. iii. 5*. When the apostle spoke so *fluently* of the things of God, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts ii. 4), and afterwards preached and wrote the gospel of Christ with such a *flood* of divine eloquence, then this was fulfilled, *Out of his belly shall flow rivers*.

(3.) This plentiful effusion of the Spirit was yet the matter of a promise; for *the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*. See here, [1.] That *Jesus was not yet glorified*. It was certain that he should be glorified, and he was ever worthy of all honour; but he was as yet in a state of humiliation and contempt. He had never forfeited the glory he had before all worlds, nay, he had *merited* a further glory, and, besides his *hereditary* honours, might claim the *achievement* of a *mediatorial* crown; and yet all this is in reversion. Jesus is now *upheld* (Isa. xlii. 1), is now *satisfied* (Isa. liii. 11), is now *justified* (1 Tim. iii. 16), but he is *not yet glorified*. And, if Christ must wait for his glory, let not us think it much to wait for ours.

[2.] That *the Holy Ghost was not yet given*. οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα—for the Holy Ghost was not yet. The Spirit of God was from eternity, for in the beginning he *moved upon the face of the waters*. He was in the Old-Testament prophets and saints, and Zacharias and Elisabeth were both *filled with the Holy Ghost*. This therefore must be understood of that eminent, plentiful, and general effusion of the Spirit which was promised, Joel ii. 28, and accomplished, Acts ii. 1, &c. *The Holy Ghost was not yet given* in that visible manner that was intended. If we compare the clear knowledge and strong grace of the disciples of Christ themselves, after the day of Pentecost, with their darkness and weakness before, we shall understand in what sense *the Holy Ghost was not yet given*; the earnest and first-fruits of the Spirit were given, but the full harvest was not yet come. That which is most properly called the *dispensation of the Spirit* did not yet commence. *The Holy Ghost was not yet given* in such rivers of living water as should issue forth to water the whole earth, even the Gentile world, not in the *gifts of tongues*, to which perhaps this promise principally refers. [3.] That the reason why *the Holy Ghost was not given* was because *Jesus was not yet glorified*. First, The death of Christ is sometimes called his

glorification (*ch. xiii. 31*); for in his cross he conquered and triumphed. Now the gift of the Holy Ghost was purchased by the blood of Christ: this was the *valuable consideration* upon which the *grant* was grounded, and therefore till this *price* was *paid* (though many other gifts were bestowed upon its being *secured* to be paid) the Holy Ghost was not given. Secondly, There was not so much need of the Spirit, while Christ himself was here upon earth, as there was when he was gone, to supply the want of him. Thirdly, The giving of the Holy Ghost was to be both an *answer* to Christ's *intercession* (*ch. xiv. 16*), and an *act* of his *dominion*; and therefore till he is glorified, and enters upon both these, the Holy Ghost is not given. Fourthly, The conversion of the Gentiles was the glorifying of Jesus. When certain Greeks began to enquire after Christ, he said, *Now is the Son of man glorified, ch. xii. 23*. Now the time when the gospel should be propagated in the nations was not yet come, and therefore there was as yet no occasion for the *gift of tongues*, that *river of living water*. But observe, though the Holy Ghost was not yet given, yet he was *promised*; it was now the great *promise of the Father*, Acts i. 4. Though the gifts of Christ's grace are *long deferred*, yet they are *well secured*: and, while we are waiting for the good promise, we have the promise to live upon, which *shall speak and shall not lie*.

II. The consequents of this discourse, what entertainment it met with; in general, it occasioned differences: *There was a division among the people because of him, v. 43*. There was a *schism*, so the word is; there were diversities of opinions, and those managed with heat and contention; various sentiments, and those such as set them at *variance*. Think we that Christ came to send peace, that all would unanimously embrace his gospel? No, the effect of the preaching of his gospel would be *division*, for, while some are *gathered to it*, others will be *gathered against it*; and this will put things into a *ferment*, as here; but this is no more the fault of the gospel than it is the fault of a wholesome medicine that it stirs up the *peccant humours* in the body, in order to the discharge of them. Observe what the debate was:—

1. Some were *taken with him*, and well affected to him: *Many of the people, when they heard this saying*, heard him with such compassion and kindness invite poor sinners to him, and with such authority engage to make them happy, that they could not but think highly of him. (1.) Some of them said, *O a truth this is the prophet*, that prophet whom Moses spoke of to the fathers, who should be *like unto him*; or, This is the *prophet* who, according to the received notions of the Jewish church, is to be the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah; or, *This is truly a prophet*, one divinely inspired and sent of God. (2.) Others went further, and said



*This is the Christ* (v. 41), not the *prophet* of the Messiah, but the Messiah himself. The Jews had at this time a more than ordinary expectation of the Messiah, which made them ready to say upon every occasion, *Lo, here is Christ*, or *Lo, he is there*; and this seems to be only the effect of some such confused and floating notions which caught at the first appearance, for we do not find that these people became his disciples and followers; a good opinion of Christ is far short of a lively faith in Christ; many give Christ a good word that give him no more. These here said, *This is the prophet*, and *this is the Christ*, but could not persuade themselves to leave all and follow him; and so this their testimony to Christ was but a testimony *against themselves*.

2. Others were *prejudiced against him*. No sooner was this great truth started, that *Jesus is the Christ*, than immediately it was contradicted and argued against: and this one thing, that his rise and origin were (as they took it for granted) out of Galilee, was thought enough to answer all the arguments for his being the Christ. For, *shall Christ come out of Galilee?* Has not the scripture said that *Christ comes of the seed of David*? See here, (1.) A laudable knowledge of the scripture. They were so far in the right, that the Messiah was to be a *rod out of the stem of Jesse* (Isa. xi. 1), that out of Bethlehem should arise the Governor, Mic. v. 2. This even the common people knew by the traditional expositions which their scribes gave them. Perhaps the people who had these scriptures so ready to object against Christ were not alike knowing in other parts of holy writ, but had had these put into their mouths by their leaders, to fortify their prejudices against Christ. Many that espouse some corrupt notions, and spend their zeal in defence of them, seem to be very ready in the scriptures, when indeed they know little more than those scriptures which they have been taught to *pervert*. (2.) A culpable ignorance of our Lord Jesus. They speak of it as certain and past dispute that *Jesus was of Galilee*, whereas by enquiring of himself, or his mother, or his disciples, or by consulting the genealogies of the family of David, or the register at Bethlehem, they might have known that he was the Son of David, and a native of Bethlehem; but *this they willingly are ignorant of*. Thus gross falsehoods in matters of fact, concerning persons and things, are often taken up by prejudiced and partial men, and great resolves founded upon them, even in the same place and the same age wherein the persons live and the things are done, while the truth might easily be found out.

3. Others were *enraged against him*, and they would have taken him, v. 44. Though what he said was most sweet and gracious, yet they were exasperated against him for it. Thus did our Master suffer ill for saying and

doing well. *They would have taken him*; they hoped somebody or other would seize him, and, if they had thought no one else would, they would have done it themselves. *They would have taken him*; but no man laid hands on him, being restrained by an invisible power, because his hour was not come. As the malice of Christ's enemies is always *unreasonable*, so sometimes the suspension of it is *unaccountable*.

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, *Why have ye not brought him?* 46 The officers answered, *Never man spake like this man.* 47 Then answered them the Pharisees, *Are ye also deceived?* 48 *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?* 49 But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. 50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) 51 *Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?* 52 They answered and said unto him, *Art thou also of Galilee?* Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. 53 And every man went unto his own house.

The chief priests and Pharisees are here in a close cabal, contriving how to suppress Christ; though this was the *great day of the feast*, they attended not the religious services of the day, but left them to the vulgar, to whom it was common for those great ecclesiastics to consign and turn over the business of devotion, while they thought themselves better employed in the affairs of church-policy. They sat in the council-chamber, expecting Christ to be brought a prisoner to them, as they had issued out warrants for apprehending him, v. 32. Now here we are told,

I. What passed between them and their own officers, who returned without him, *re infecta*—*having done nothing*. Observe,

1. The reproof they gave the officers for not executing the warrant they gave them: *Why have you not brought him?* He appeared publicly; the people were many of them disgusted, and would have assisted them in taking him; this was the *last day of the feast*, and they would not have such another opportunity; "why then did you neglect your duty?" It vexed them that those who were their own creatures, who depended on them, and on whom they depended, into whose minds they had instilled prejudices against Christ, should thus disappoint them. Note. Mischievous men fret that they cannot do the mischief they would, Ps. cxii. 10; Neh. vi. 16.

2. The reason which the officers gave for the non-execution of their warrant: *Never man spoke like this man*, v. 46. Now, (1.) This was a very great truth, that *never any man spoke with that wisdom, and power, and grace, that convincing clearness, and that charming sweetness, wherewith Christ spoke; none of the prophets, no, not Moses himself.* (2.) The very officers that were sent to take him were taken with him, and acknowledged this. Though they were probably men who had no quick sense of reason or eloquence, and certainly had no inclination to think well of Jesus, yet so much *self-evidence* was there in what Christ said that they could not but prefer him before all those that sat in Moses's seat. Thus Christ was preserved by the power God has upon the consciences even of bad men. (3.) They said this to their lords and masters, who could not endure to hear anything that tended to the honour of Christ and yet could not avoid hearing this. Providence ordered it so that this should be said to them, that it might be a vexation in their sin and an aggravation of their sin. Their own officers, who could not be suspected to be biased in favour of Christ, are witnesses against them. This testimony of theirs should have made them reflect upon themselves, with this thought, "Do we know what we are doing, when we are hating and persecuting one that speaks so admirably well?"

3. The Pharisees endeavour to secure their officers to their interest, and to beget in them prejudices against Christ, to whom they saw them begin to be well affected. They suggest two things:—

(1.) That if they embrace the gospel of Christ they will *deceive themselves* (v. 47): *Are you also deceived?* Christianity has, from its first rise, been represented to the world as a great cheat upon it, and they that embraced it as men *deceived*, then when they began to be *undeceived*. Those that looked for a Messiah in external pomp thought those deceived who believed in a Messiah that appeared in poverty and disgrace; but the event declares that none were ever more shamefully deceived, nor put a greater cheat upon themselves, than those who promised themselves worldly wealth and secular dominion with the Messiah. Observe what a *compliment* the Pharisees paid to these officers: "*Are you also deceived?* What! men of your sense, and thought, and figure; men that know better than to be imposed upon by every pretender and upstart teacher?" They endeavour to prejudice them against Christ by persuading them to think well of themselves.

(2.) That they will *disparage themselves*. Most men, even in their religion, are willing to be governed by the example of those of the *first rank*; these officers therefore, whose preferments, such as they were, gave them a *sense of honour*, are desired to consider,

[1.] That, if they become disciples of Christ, they go contrary to those who were

persons of quality and reputation: "*Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?* You know they have not, and you ought to be bound up by their judgment, and to *believe* and *do* in religion according to the will of your superiors; will you be wiser than they?" Some of the rulers did embrace Christ (Matt. ix. 18; ch. iv. 53), and more believed in him, but wanted courage to confess him (ch. xii. 42); but, when the interest of Christ runs low in the world, it is common for its adversaries to represent it as lower than really it is. But it was too true that few, very few, of them did. Note, *First*, The cause of Christ has seldom had rulers and Pharisees on its side. It needs not secular supports, nor proposes secular advantages, and therefore neither courts nor is courted by the great men of this world. *Self-denial* and the *cross* are hard lessons to *rulers* and *Pharisees*. *Secondly*, This has confirmed many in their prejudices against Christ and his gospel, that the rulers and Pharisees have been no friends to them. Shall *secular* men pretend to be more concerned about *spiritual* things than spiritual men themselves, or to see further into religion than those who make its study their profession? If *rulers* and *Pharisees* do not believe in Christ, they that do believe in him will be the most singular, unfashionable, ungenteel people in the world, and quite out of the way of preferment; thus are people foolishly swayed by *external motives* in matters of *eternal moment*, are willing to be damned for fashion-sake, and to go to hell in compliment to the *rulers* and *Pharisees*.

[2.] That they will link themselves with the despicable vulgar sort of people (v. 43): *But this people, who know not the law, are cursed*, meaning especially those that were well-affected to the doctrine of Christ. Observe, *First*, How scornfully and disdainfully they speak of them: *This people*. It is not λαός, this *lay-people*, distinguished from them that were the clergy, but ὄχλος οἶκος, this *rabble-people*, this pitiful, scandalous, scoundrel people, whom they disdain to *set with the dogs of their flock*, though God had set them with the lambs of his. If they meant the *commonalty of the Jewish nation*, they were the seed of Abraham, and in covenant with God, and not to be spoken of with such contempt. The church's common interests are betrayed when any one part of it studies to render the other mean and despicable. If they meant the *followers of Christ*, though they were generally persons of small figure and fortune, yet by owning Christ they discovered such a sagacity, integrity, and interest in the favours of Heaven, as made them truly great and considerable. Note, As the wisdom of God has often chosen base things, and things which are despised, so the folly of men has commonly debased and despised those whom God has chosen. *Secondly*, How unjustly they reproach them as ignorant of the word of God: *They know not the law*; as



None knew the law but those that knew it from them, and no scripture-knowledge were current but what came out of their mint; and as if none knew the law but such as were observant of their canons and traditions. Perhaps many of those whom they thus despised *knew the law*, and the prophets too, better than they did. Many a plain, honest, unlearned disciple of Christ, by meditation, experience, prayers, and especially obedience, attains to a more clear, sound, and useful knowledge of the word of God, than some great scholars with all their wit and learning. Thus David came to understand *more than the ancients and all his teachers*, Ps. cxix. 99, 100. If the common people did not *know the law*, yet the chief priests and Pharisees, of all men, should not have upbraided them with this; for whose fault was it but theirs, who should have *taught them better*, but, instead of that, *took away the key of knowledge*? Luke xi. 52. *Thirdly*, How magisterially they pronounce sentence upon them: they are *cursed*, hateful to God, and all wise men; *ἐπικαταρόντες*—an execrable people. It is well that their saying they were cursed did not make them so, for the *curse causeless shall not come*. It is a usurpation of God's prerogative, as well as great uncharitableness, to say of any particular persons, much more of any body of people, that they are reprobates. We are unable to *try*, and therefore unfit to *condemn*, and our rule is, *Bless, and curse not*. Some think they meant no more than that the people were *apt to be deceived and made fools of*; but they use this odious word, *They are cursed*, to express their own indignation, and to frighten their officers from having any thing to do with them; thus the language of hell, in our profane age, calls every thing that is displeasing *cursed*, and *damed*, and *confounded*. Now, for aught that appears, these officers had their convictions baffled and stifled by these suggestions, and they never enquire further after Christ; one word from a ruler or Pharisee will sway more with many than the true reason of things, and the great interests of their souls.

II. What passed between them and Nicodemus, a member of their own body, v. 50, &c. Observe,

1. The just and rational objection which Nicodemus made against their proceedings. Even in their corrupt and wicked sanhedrim God left not himself quite *without witness against their enmity*; nor was the vote against Christ carried *nemine contradicente*—*unanimously*. Observe,

(1.) Who it was that appeared against them; it was Nicodemus, *he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them*, v. 50. Observe, concerning him, [1.] That, though he had been with Jesus, and taken him for his teacher, yet he retained his place in the council, and his vote among them. Some impute this to his *weakness* and cowardice, and think it was his fault that he did not quit his place,

but Christ had never said to him, *Follow me*, else he would have done as others that left all to follow him; therefore it seems rather to have been his *wisdom* not immediately to throw up his place, because there he might have opportunity of serving Christ and his interest, and stemming the tide of the Jewish rage, which perhaps he did more than we are aware of. He might there be as Hushai among Absalom's counsellors, instrumental to *turn their counsels into foolishness*. Though we must in no case deny our Master, yet we may wait for an opportunity of confessing him to the best advantage. God has his remnant among all sorts, and many times finds, or puts, or makes, some good in the worst places and societies. There was Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, and Nehemiah in Artaxerxes's. [2.] That though at first he came to Jesus *by night*, for fear of being known, and still continued in his post; yet, when there was occasion, he boldly appeared in defence of Christ, and opposed the whole council that were set against him. Thus many believers who at first were timorous, and ready to *flee at the shaking of a leaf*, have at length, by divine grace, grown courageous, and able to *laugh at the shaking of a spear*. Let none justify the disguising of their faith by the example of Nicodemus, unless, like him, they be ready upon the first occasion openly to appear in the cause of Christ, though they stand alone in it; for so Nicodemus did here, and *ch. xix. 39*.

(2.) What he alleged against their proceedings (v. 51): *Doth our law judge any man before it hear him* (ἀκούσῃ παρ' αὐτοῦ—hear from himself) and *know what he doeth*? By no means, nor doth the law of any civilized nation allow it. Observe, [1.] He prudently argues from the principles of their own law, and an incontestable rule of justice, that no man is to be condemned *unheard*. Had he urged the excellency of Christ's doctrine or the evidence of his miracles, or repeated to them his divine discourse with him (*ch. 3*), it had been but to *cast pearls before swine*, who would *trample them under their feet*, and would *turn again and rend him*; therefore he waives them. [2.] Whereas they had reproached the people, especially the followers of Christ, as *ignorant of the law*, he here tacitly retorts the charge upon themselves, and shows how ignorant they were of some of the first principles of the law, so unfit were they to give law to others. [3.] The law is here said to *judge*, and *hear*, and *know*, when magistrates that govern and are governed by it *judge*, and *hear*, and *know*; for they are *the mouth of the law*, and whatsoever they bind and loose according to the law is justly said to be bound and loosed by the law. [4.] It is highly fit that none should come under the *sentence* of the law, till they have first by a fair trial undergone the *scrutiny* of it. Judges, when they receive the complaints of the accuser, must always *reserve in their*

minds room for the defence of the accused, for they have two ears, to remind them to hear both sides; this is said to be the manner of the Romans, Acts xxv. 18. The method of our law is *Oyer* and *Termner*, first to hear and then to determine. [5.] Persons are to be judged, not by what is said of them, but by what they do. Our law will not ask what men's opinions are of them, or out-cries against them, but, What have they done? What *overt-acts* can they be convicted of? Sentence must be given, *secundum allegata et probata*—according to what is alleged and proved. Facts, and not faces, must be known in judgment; and the scale of justice must be used before the sword of justice.

Now we may suppose that the motion Nicodemus made in the house upon this was, That Jesus should be desired to come and give them an account of himself and his doctrine, and that they should favour him with an impartial and unprejudiced hearing; but, though none of them could gainsay his maxim, none of them would second his motion.

2. What was said to this objection. Here is no direct reply given to it; but, when they could not resist the force of his argument, they fell foul upon him, and what was to seek in reason they made up in railing and reproach. Note, It is a sign of a bad cause when men cannot bear to hear reason, and take it as an affront to be reminded of its maxims. Whoever are against reason give cause to suspect that reason is against them. See how they taunt him: *Art thou also of Galilee?* v. 52. Some think he was well enough served for continuing among those whom he knew to be enemies to Christ, and for his speaking no more on the behalf of Christ than what he might have said on behalf of the greatest criminal—that he should not be condemned unheard. Had he said, “As for this Jesus, I have heard him myself, and know he is a teacher come from God,” as he ought to have said, he could not have been more abused than he was for this feeble effort of his tenderness for Christ. As to what they said to Nicodemus, we may observe,

(1.) How false the grounds of their arguing were, for, [1.] They suppose that Christ was of Galilee, and this was false, and if they would have been at the pains of an impartial enquiry they would have found it so. [2.] They suppose that because most of his disciples were Galileans they were all such, whereas he had abundance of disciples in Judea. [3.] They suppose that out of Galilee no prophet had risen, and for this appeal to Nicodemus's search; yet this was false too. Jonah was of Gath-hepher, Nahum an Elkoshite, both of Galilee. Thus do they make lies their refuge.

(2.) How absurd their arguing was upon these grounds, such as were a shame to

rulers and Pharisees. [1.] Is any man of worth and virtue ever the worse for the poverty and obscurity of his country? The Galileans were the seed of Abraham; barbarians and Scythians are the seed of Adam; and have we not all one Father? [2.] Supposing no prophet had risen out of Galilee, yet it is not impossible that any should arise thence. If Elijah was the first prophet of Gilead (as perhaps he was), and if the Gileadites were called fugitives, must it therefore be questioned whether he was a prophet or no?

3. The hasty adjournment of the court hereupon. They broke up the assembly in confusion, and with precipitation, and every man went to his own house. They met to take counsel together against the Lord and his Anointed, but they imagined a vain thing; and not only he that sits in heaven laughed at them, but we may sit on earth and laugh at them too, to see all the policy of the close cabal broken to pieces with one plain honest word. They were not willing to hear Nicodemus, because they could not answer him. As soon as they perceived they had one such among them, they saw it was to no purpose to go on with their design, and therefore put off the debate to a more convenient season, when he was absent. Thus the counsel of the Lord is made to stand, in spite of the devices in the hearts of men.

## CHAP. VIII.

In this chapter we have, 1. Christ's evading the snare which the Jews laid for him, in bringing to him a woman taken in adultery, ver. 1–11. 2. Divers discourses or conferences of his with the Jews that cavilled at him, and sought occasion against him, and made every thing he said a matter of controversy. 1. Concerning his being the light of the world, ver. 12–20. 2. Concerning the ruin of the unbelieving Jews, ver. 21–30. 3. Concerning liberty and bondage, ver. 31–37. 4. Concerning his Father and their father, ver. 38–47. 5. Here is his discourse in answer to their blasphemous reproaches, ver. 48–50. 6. Concerning the immortality of believers, ver. 51–59. And in all this he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself.

**J**ESUS went unto the mount of Olives. 2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. 3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? 6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. 7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him



first cast a stone at her. 8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. 9 And they which heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Though Christ was basely abused in the foregoing chapter, both by the rulers and by the people, yet here we have him still at Jerusalem, still in the temple. *How often would he have gathered them!* Observe,

I. His retirement in the evening out of the town (v. 1): *He went unto the mount of olives*; whether to some friend's house, or to some booth pitched there, now at the feast of tabernacles, is not certain; whether he rested there, or, as some think, continued all night in prayer to God, we are not told. But he went out of Jerusalem, perhaps because he had no friend there that had either kindness or courage enough to give him a night's lodging; while his persecutors had *houses* of their own to go to (ch. vii. 53), he could not so much as borrow a place to lay his head on, but what he must go a mile or two out of town for. He retired (as some think) because he would not expose himself to the peril of a popular tumult in the night. It is prudent to go out of the way of danger whenever we can do it without going out of the way of duty. In the day-time, when he had work to do in the temple, he willingly exposed himself, and was under special protection, Isa. xlix. 2. But in the night, when he had not work to do, he withdrew into the country, and sheltered himself there.

II. His return in the morning to the temple, and to his work there, v. 2. Observe,

1. What a diligent preacher Christ was: *Early in the morning he came again, and taught*. Though he had been teaching the day before, he taught again to-day. Christ was a constant preacher, in season and out of season. Three things were taken notice of here concerning Christ's preaching. (1.) The time: *Early in the morning*. Though he lodged out of town, and perhaps had spent much of the night in secret prayer, yet he came *early*. When a day's work is to be done for God and souls it is good to begin betimes, and take the day before us. (2.) The place: *In the temple*; not so much because it was a consecrated place (for then he would

have chosen it at other times) as because it was now a *place of concourse*; and he would hereby countenance solemn assemblies for religious worship, and encourage people to come up to the temple, for he had not yet left it desolate. (3.) His posture: *He sat down*, and taught, as one having authority, and as one that intended to abide by it for some time.

2. How diligently his preaching was attended upon: *All the people came unto him*; and perhaps many of them were the country-people, who were this day to return home from the feast, and were desirous to hear one sermon more from the mouth of Christ before they returned. They came to him, though he came early. They that *seek him early shall find him*. Though the rulers were displeased at those that came to hear him, yet they would come; and *he taught them*, though they were angry at him too. Though there were few or none among them that were persons of any figure, yet Christ bade them welcome, and taught them.

III. His dealing with those that brought to him the woman taken in adultery, tempting him. The scribes and Pharisees would not only not hear Christ patiently themselves, but they disturbed him when the people were attending on him. Observe here,

1. The case proposed to him by the scribes and Pharisees, who herein contrived to pick a quarrel with him, and bring him into a snare, v. 3—6.

(1.) They set the prisoner to the bar (v. 3): they brought him a woman taken in adultery, perhaps now lately taken, during the time of the feast of tabernacles, when, it may be, their dwelling in booths, and their feasting and joy, might, by wicked minds, which corrupt the best things, be made occasions of sin. Those that were taken in adultery were by the Jewish law to be put to death, which the Roman powers allowed them the execution of, and therefore she was brought before the ecclesiastical court. Observe, She was taken in her adultery. Though adultery is a work of darkness, which the criminals commonly take all the care they can to conceal, yet sometimes it is strangely brought to light. Those that promise themselves secrecy in sin deceive themselves. The scribes and Pharisees bring her to Christ, and set her in the midst of the assembly, as if they would leave her wholly to the judgment of Christ, he having *sat down*, as a judge upon the bench.

(2.) They prefer an indictment against her: *Master, this woman was taken in adultery, v. 4*. Here they call him *Master* whom but the day before they had called a *deceiver*, in hopes with their flatteries to have ensnared him, as those, Luke xx. 20. But, though men may be imposed upon with compliments, he that searches the heart cannot.

[1.] The crime for which the prisoner stands indicted is no less than adultery,

which even in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses, was looked upon as *an iniquity to be punished by the judges*, Job xxxi. 9—11; Gen. xxxviii. 24. The Pharisees, by their vigorous prosecution of this offender, seemed to have a great zeal against the sin, when it appeared afterwards that they themselves were not free from it; nay, they were within *full of all uncleanness*, Matt. xxiii. 27, 28. Note, It is common for those that are indulgent to their own sin to be severe against the sins of others.

[2.] The proof of the crime was from the notorious evidence of the fact, an incontestable proof; she was *taken in the act*, so that there was no room left to plead not guilty. Had she not been taken in this act, she might have gone on to another, till her heart had been perfectly hardened; but sometimes it proves a mercy to sinners to have their sin brought to light, that they may *do no more presumptuously*. Better our sin should *shame us than damn us*, and be set in order before us for our conviction than for our condemnation.

(3.) They produce the statute in this case made and provided, and upon which she was indicted, v. 5. Moses in the law commanded *that such should be stoned*. Moses commanded that they should be *put to death* (Lev. xx. 10; Deut. xxii. 22), but not that they should be stoned, unless the adulteress was espoused, not married, or was a priest's daughter, Deut. xxii. 21. Note, Adultery is an exceedingly sinful sin, for it is the rebellion of a vile lust, not only against the command, but against the covenant, of our God. It is the violation of a divine institution in innocency, by the indulgence of one of the basest lusts of man in his degeneracy.

(4.) They pray his judgment in the case: "*But what sayest thou*, who pretendest to be a teacher come from God to repeal old laws and enact new ones? What hast thou to say in this case?" If they had asked this question in sincerity, with a humble desire to know his mind, it had been very commendable. Those that are entrusted with the administration of justice should look up to Christ for direction; but *this they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him*, v. 6. [1.] If he should confirm the sentence of the law, and let it take its course, they would censure him as inconsistent with himself (he having received publicans and harlots) and with the character of the Messiah, who should be meek, and have salvation, and proclaim a year of release; and perhaps they would accuse him to the Roman governor, for countenancing the Jews in the exercise of a judicial power. But, [2.] If he should acquit her, and give his opinion that the sentence should not be executed (as they expected he would), they would represent him, *First*, As an enemy to the law of Moses, and as one that usurped an authority to correct and control it, and would confirm that

prejudice against him which his enemies were so industrious to propagate, that he came to *destroy the law and the prophets*. *Secondly*, As a friend to sinners, and, consequently, a favourer of sin; if he should seem to connive at such wickedness, and let it go unpunished, they would represent him as countenancing it, and being a patron of offences, if he was a protector of offenders, than which no reflection could be more invidious upon one that professed the strictness, purity, and business of a prophet.

2. The method he took to resolve this case, and so to break this snare.

(1.) He seemed to slight it, and turned a deaf ear to it: He *stooped down, and wrote on the ground*. It is impossible to tell, and therefore needless to ask, what he wrote; but this is the only mention made in the gospels of Christ's writing. Eusebius indeed speaks of his writing to Abgarus, king of Edessa. Some think they have a liberty of conjecture as to what he wrote here. Grotius says, It was some grave weighty saying, and that it was usual for wise men, when they were very thoughtful concerning any thing, to do so. Jerome and Ambrose suppose he wrote, *Let the names of these wicked men be written in the dust*. Others this, *The earth accuses the earth, but the judgment is mine*. Christ by this teaches us to be slow to speak when difficult cases are proposed to us, not quickly to shoot our bolt; and when provocations are given us, or we are bantered, to pause and consider before we reply; think twice before we speak once: *The heart of the wise studies to answer*. Our translation from some Greek copies, which add, *μη προσποιούμενος* (though most copies have it not), give this account of the reason of his writing on the ground, *as though he heard them not*. He did as it were look another way, to show that he was not willing to take notice of their address, saying, in effect, *Who made me a judge or a divider?* It is safe in many cases to be deaf to that which it is not safe to answer, Ps. xxxviii. 13. Christ would not have his ministers to be entangled in secular affairs. Let them rather employ themselves in any lawful studies, and fill up their time in writing on the ground (which nobody will heed), than busy themselves in that which does not belong to them. But, when Christ seemed as though he heard them not, he made it appear that he not only heard their words, but knew their thoughts.

(2.) When they importunately, or rather impertinently, pressed him for an answer, he turned the conviction of the prisoner upon the prosecutors, v. 7.

[1.] They *continued asking him*, and his seeming not to take notice of them made them the more vehement; for now they thought sure enough that they had run him aground, and that he could not avoid the imputation of contradicting either the law of



Moses, if he should acquit the prisoner, or his own doctrine of mercy and pardon, if he should condemn her; and therefore they pushed on their appeal to him with vigour; whereas they should have construed his disregard of them as a check to their design, and an intimation to them to desist, as they tendered their own reputation.

[2.] At last he put them all to shame and silence with one word: *He lifted up himself*, awaking as one out of sleep (Ps. lxxviii. 65), and said unto them, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

First, Here Christ avoided the snare which they had laid for him, and effectually saved his own reputation. He neither reflected upon the law nor excused the prisoner's guilt, nor did he on the other hand encourage the prosecution or countenance their heat; see the good effect of consideration. When we cannot make our point by steering a direct course, it is good to fetch a compass.

Secondly, *In the net which they spread is their own foot taken.* They came with design to accuse him, but they were forced to accuse themselves. Christ owns it was fit the prisoner should be prosecuted, but appeals to their consciences whether they were fit to be the prosecutors.

a. He here refers to that rule which the law of Moses prescribed in the execution of criminals, that the *hand of the witnesses must be first upon them* (Deut. xvii. 7), as in the stoning of Stephen, Acts vii. 58. The scribes and Pharisees were the witnesses against this woman. Now Christ puts it to them whether, according to their own law, they would dare to be the executioners. Durst they take away that life with their hands which they were now taking away with their tongues? would not their own consciences fly in their faces if they did?

b. He builds upon an uncontested maxim in morality, that it is very absurd for men to be zealous in punishing the offences of others, while they are every whit as guilty themselves, and they are not better than self-condemned who judge others, and yet themselves do the same thing: "If there be any of you who is *without sin*, without sin of this nature, that has not some time or other been guilty of fornication or adultery, let him cast the first stone at her." Not that magistrates, who are conscious of guilt themselves, should therefore connive at others' guilt. But therefore, (a.) Whenever we find fault with others, we ought to reflect upon ourselves, and to be more severe against sin in ourselves than in others. (b.) We ought to be favourable, though not to the sins, yet to the persons, of those that offend, and to restore them with a *spirit of meekness*, considering ourselves and our own corrupt nature. *Aut sumus, aut fuimus, vel possumus esse quod hic est—We either are, or have been, or may be, what he is.* Let this restrain us from throwing stones at our brethren, and proclaiming their

faults. *Let him that is without sin* begin such discourse as this, and then those that are truly humbled for their own sins will blush at it, and be glad to let it drop. (c.) Those that are any way obliged to animadvert upon the faults of others are concerned to look well to themselves, and keep themselves pure (Matt. vii. 5), *Qui alterum incusat probri, ipsum se intueri oportet.* The snuffers of the tabernacle were of pure gold.

c. Perhaps he refers to the trial of the suspected wife by the jealous husband with the waters of jealousy. The man was to bring her to the priest (Num. v. 15), as the scribes and Pharisees brought this woman to Christ. Now it was a received opinion among the Jews, and confirmed by experience, that if the husband who brought his wife to that trial had himself been at any time guilty of adultery, *Aquæ non explorant ejus uxorem—The bitter water had no effect upon the wife.* "Come then," saith Christ, "according to your own tradition will I judge you; if you are without sin, stand to the charge, and let the adulteress be executed; but if not, though she be guilty, while you that present her are equally so, according to your own rule she shall be free."

d. In this he attended to the great work which he came into the world about, and that was to bring sinners to repentance; not to destroy, but to save. He aimed to bring, not only the prisoner to repentance, by showing her his mercy, but the prosecutors too, by showing them their sins. They sought to ensnare him; he sought to convince and convert them. Thus the blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul.

[3.] Having given them this startling word, he left them to consider of it, and again stooped down, and wrote on the ground, v. 8. As when they made their address he seemed to slight their question, so now that he had given them an answer he slighted their resentment of it, not caring what they said to it; nay, they needed not to make any reply; the matter was lodged in their own breasts, let them make the best of it there. Or, he would not seem to wait for an answer, lest they should on a sudden justify themselves, and then think themselves bound in honour to persist in it; but gives them time to pause, and to commune with their own hearts. God saith, *I hearkened and heard*, Jer. viii. 6. Some Greek copies here read, *He wrote on the ground, ἐνδὲς ἑκάστου αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας—the sins of every one of them;* this he could do, for he sets our iniquities before him; and this he will do, for he will set them in order before us too; he seals up our transgressions, Job xiv. 17. But he does not write men's sins in the sand; no, they are written as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond (Jer. xvii. 1), never to be forgotten till they are forgiven.

[4.] The scribes and Pharisees were so strangely thunderstruck with the words or

Christ that they let fall their persecution of Christ, whom they durst no further tempt, and their prosecution of the woman, whom they durst no longer accuse (v. 9): *They went out one by one.*

*First*, Perhaps his writing on the ground frightened them, as the hand-writing on the wall frightened Belshazzar. They concluded he was writing bitter things against them, writing their doom. Happy they who have no reason to be afraid of Christ's writing!

*Secondly*, What he said frightened them by sending them to their own consciences; he had *shown them to themselves*, and they were afraid if they should stay till he lifted up himself again his next word would show them to the world, and shame them before men, and therefore they thought it best to withdraw. They went out *one by one*, that they might go out *softly*, and not by a noisy flight disturb Christ; they went away by *stealth*, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle, 2 Sam. xix. 3. The order of their departure is taken notice of, *beginning at the eldest*, either because they were most guilty, or first aware of the danger they were in of being put to the blush; and if the eldest quit the field, and retreat ingloriously, no marvel if the younger follow them. Now see here, 1. The force of the word of Christ for the conviction of sinners: *They who heard it were convicted by their own consciences.* Conscience is God's deputy in the soul, and one word from him will set it on work, Heb. iv. 12. Those that had been old in adulteries, and long fixed in a proud opinion of themselves, were here, even the oldest of them, startled by the word of Christ; even scribes and Pharisees, who were most conceited of themselves, are by the power of Christ's word made to retire with shame. 2. The folly of sinners under these convictions, which appears in these scribes and Pharisees. (1.) It is folly for those that are under convictions to make it their principal care to *avoid shame*, as Judah (Gen. xxxviii. 23), *lest we be shamed*. Our care should be more to save our souls than to save our credit. Saul evidenced his hypocrisy when he said, *I have sinned, yet now honour me, I pray thee*. There is no way to get the honour and comfort of penitents, but by taking the shame of penitents. (2.) It is folly for those that are under convictions to contrive how to *shift off* their convictions, and to get rid of them. The scribes and Pharisees had the wound *opened*, and now they should have been desirous to have it *searched*, and then it might have been *healed*, but this was the thing they *dreaded* and *declined*. (3.) It is folly for those that are under convictions to *get away from Jesus Christ*, as these here did, for he is the only one that can heal the wounds of conscience, and speak peace to us. Those that are convicted by their consciences will be condemned by their Judge if they be not justified by

their Redeemer; and will they then go from him? To whom will they go?

[5.] When the *self-conceited* prosecutors quitted the field, and *fled for the same*, the *self-condemned* prisoner stood her ground, with a resolution to abide by the judgment of our Lord Jesus: *Jesus was left alone* from the company of the scribes and Pharisees, free from their molestations, and the woman *standing in the midst* of the assembly that were attending on Christ's preaching, where they set her, v. 3. She did not seek to make her escape, though she had opportunity for it; but her prosecutors had appealed unto Jesus, and to him she would go, on him she would wait for her doom. Note, Those whose cause is brought before our Lord Jesus will never have occasion to remove it into any other court, for he is the refuge of penitents. The law which accuses us, and calls for judgment against us, is by the gospel of Christ made to withdraw; its demands are answered, and its clamours silenced, by the blood of Jesus. Our cause is lodged in the gospel court; we are *left with Jesus alone*, it is with him only that we have now to deal, for to him all judgment is committed; let us therefore secure our interest in him, and we are made for ever. Let his gospel *rule us*, and it will infallibly *save us*.

[6.] Here is the conclusion of the trial, and the issue it was brought to: *Jesus lifted up himself, and he saw none but the woman*, v. 10, 11. Though Christ may seem to take no notice of what is said and done, but leave it to the *contending* sons of men to *deal it out among themselves*, yet, when the hour of his judgment is come, he will no longer keep silence. When David had appealed to God, he prayed, *Lift up thyself*, Ps. vii. 6, and xciv. 2. The woman, it is likely, stood trembling at the bar, as one doubtful of the issue. Christ was *without sin*, and might cast the first stone; but though none more severe than he against sin, for he is infinitely just and holy, none more compassionate than he to sinners, for he is infinitely gracious and merciful, and this poor malefactor finds him so, now that she *stands upon her deliverance*. Here is the method of courts of judicature observed.

*First*, The prosecutors are called: *Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?* Not but that Christ knew where they were; but he asked, that he might shame them, who declined his judgment, and encourage her who resolved to abide by it. St. Paul's challenge is like this, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* Where are those their accusers? *The accuser of the brethren shall be fairly cast out*, and all indictments legally and regularly quashed.

*Secondly*, They do not appear when the question is asked: *Hath no man condemned thee?* She said, *No man, Lord*. She speaks respectfully to Christ, calls him *Lord* but



is silent concerning her prosecutors, says nothing in answer to that question which concerned them, *Where are those thine accusers?* She does not triumph in their retreat nor exult over them as witnesses against themselves, not against her. If we hope to be forgiven by our Judge, we must forgive our accusers; and if their accusations, how invidious soever, were the happy occasion of awakening our consciences, we may easily *forgive them this wrong*. But she answered the question which concerned herself, *Has no man condemned thee?* True penitents find it enough to give an account of themselves to God, and will not undertake to give an account of other people.

Thirdly, The prisoner is therefore discharged: *Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more*. Consider this,

(a.) As her discharge from the temporal punishment: "If they do not condemn thee to be *stoned to death*, neither do I." Not that Christ came to disarm the magistrate of his sword of justice, nor that it is his will that capital punishments should not be inflicted on malefactors; so far from this, the administration of public justice is established by the gospel, and made subservient to Christ's kingdom: *By me kings reign*. But Christ would not condemn this woman, (a.) Because it was *none of his business*; he was no judge nor divider, and therefore would not intermeddle in secular affairs. His *kingdom was not of this world*. *Tractent fabrika fabri—Let every one act in his own province*. (b.) Because she was prosecuted by those that were more guilty than she and could not for shame insist upon their demand of justice against her. The law appointed the hands of the witnesses to be first upon the criminal, and afterwards the hands of all the people, so that if they fly off, and do not condemn her, the prosecution drops. The justice of God, in inflicting temporal judgments, sometimes takes notice of a *comparative righteousness*, and spares those who are otherwise obnoxious when the punishing of them would gratify those that are worse than they, Deut. xxxii. 26, 27. But, when Christ dismissed her, it was with this caution, *Go, and sin no more*. Impunity emboldens malefactors, and therefore those who are guilty, and yet have found means to escape the edge of the law, need to double their watch, *lest Satan get advantage*; for the fairer the escape was, the fairer the warning was to go and sin no more. Those who help to save the life of a criminal should, as Christ here, help to save the soul with this caution.

b. As her discharge from the eternal punishment. For Christ to say, *I do not condemn thee* is, in effect, to say, *I do forgive thee*; and the *Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins*, and could upon good grounds give this absolution; for as he knew the hardness and impenitent hearts of the prosecutors and therefore said that which would

confound them, so he knew the tenderness and sincere repentance of the prisoner, and therefore said that which would comfort her, as he did to that woman who was a sinner, such a sinner as this, who was likewise looked upon with disdain by a Pharisee (Luke vii. 48, 50): *Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace*. So here, *Neither do I condemn thee*.

Note, (a.) Those are truly happy whom Christ *doth not condemn*, for his discharge is a sufficient answer to all other challenges; they are all *coram non judice*—before an unauthorized judge. (b.) Christ will not condemn those who, though they have sinned, will *go and sin no more*, Ps. lxxxv. 8; Isa. lv. 7. He will not take the advantage he has against us for our former rebellions, if we will but lay down our arms and return to our allegiance. (c.) Christ's favour to us in the remission of the sins that are past should be a prevailing argument with us to *go and sin no more*, Rom. vi. 1, 2. Will not Christ condemn thee? Go then and sin no more.

12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. 13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. 14 Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. 15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. 16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. 17 It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. 19 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. 20 These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

The rest of the chapter is taken up with debates between Christ and contradicting sinners, who cavilled at the most gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. It is not certain whether these disputes were the same day that the adulteress was discharged; it is probable they were, for the

evangelist mentions no other day, and takes notice (v. 2) how early Christ began that day's work. Though those Pharisees that accused the woman had absconded, yet there were other Pharisees (v. 13) to confront Christ, who had brass enough in their foreheads to keep them in countenance, though some of their party were put to such a shameful retreat; nay perhaps that made them the more industrious to pick quarrels with him, to retrieve, if possible, the reputation of their baffled party. In these verses we have,

I. A great doctrine laid down, with the application of it.

1. The doctrine is, *That Christ is the light of the world* (v. 12): *Then spoke Jesus again unto them; though he had spoken a great deal to them to little purpose, and what he had said was opposed, yet he spoke again, for he speaketh once, yea, twice.* They had turned a deaf ear to what he said, and yet he spoke again to them, saying, *I am the light of the world.* Note, Jesus Christ is the light of the world. One of the rabbies saith, *Light* is the name of the Messiah, as it is written, Dan. ii. 22, *And light dwelleth with him.* God is light, and Christ is the image of the invisible God; God of gods, Light of lights. He was expected to be a *light to enlighten the Gentiles* (Luke ii. 32), and so the light of the world, and not of the Jewish church only. The visible light of the world is the sun, and Christ is the *Sun of righteousness.* One sun enlightens the whole world, so does one Christ, and there needs no more. Christ in calling himself the light expresses, (1.) What he is in himself—most excellent and glorious. (2.) What he is to the world—the fountain of light, enlightening every man. What a dungeon would the world be without the sun! So would it be without Christ by whom *light came into the world*, ch. iii. 19.

2. The inference from this doctrine is, *He that followeth me, as a traveller follows the light in a dark night, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* If Christ be the light, then, (1.) It is our duty to follow him, to submit ourselves to his guidance, and in every thing take directions from him, in the way that leads to happiness. Many follow *false lights*—*ignes fatui*, that lead them to destruction; but Christ is the *true light*. It is not enough to look at this light, and to gaze upon it, but we must follow it, believe in it, and walk in it, for it is a light to our feet, not our eyes only. (2.) It is the happiness of those who follow Christ that they shall not walk in darkness. They shall not be left destitute of those instructions in the way of truth which are necessary to keep them from destroying error, and those directions in the way of duty which are necessary to keep them from damning sin. They shall have the *light of life*, that knowledge and enjoyment of God which will be to them the light of spiritual life in this world and of everlasting life in the other

world, where there will be no death nor darkness. Follow Christ, and we shall undoubtedly be happy in both worlds. Follow Christ, and we shall follow him to heaven.

II. The objection which the Pharisees made against this doctrine, and it was very trifling and frivolous: *Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true*, v. 13. In this objection they went upon the suspicion which we commonly have of men's self-commendation, which is concluded to be the native language of self-love, such as we are all ready to condemn in others, but few are willing to own in themselves. But in this case the objection was very unjust, for, 1. They made that his crime, and a diminution to the credibility of his doctrine, which in the case of one who introduced a divine revelation was necessary and unavoidable. Did not Moses and all the prophets bear witness of themselves when they avouched themselves to be God's messengers? Did not the Pharisees ask John Baptist, *What sayest thou of thyself?* 2. They overlooked the testimony of all the other witnesses, which corroborated the testimony he bore of himself. Had he only borne record of himself, his testimony had indeed been *suspicious*, and the belief of it might have been *suspended*; but his doctrine was attested by more than two or three credible witnesses, enough to establish every word of it.

III. Christ's reply to this objection, v. 14. He does not retort upon them as he might ("You profess yourselves to be devout and good men, but your witness is not true"), but plainly vindicates himself; and, though he had waived his own testimony (ch. v. 31), yet here he abides by it, that it did not derogate from the credibility of his other proofs, but was necessary to show the force of them. He is the light of the world, and it is the property of light to be self-evidencing. First principles prove themselves. He urges three things to prove that his testimony, though of himself, was true and cogent.

1. That he was conscious to himself of his own authority, and abundantly satisfied in himself concerning it. He did not speak as one at uncertainty, nor propose a disputable notion, about which he himself hesitated, but declared a decree, and gave such an account of himself as he would abide by: *I know whence I came, and whither I go.* He was fully apprised of his own undertaking from first to last; knew whose errand he went upon, and what his success would be. He knew what he was before his manifestation to the world, and what he should be after; that he came from the Father, and was going to him (ch. xvi. 28), came from glory, and was going to glory, ch. xvii. 5. This is the satisfaction of all good Christians, that though the world know them not, as it knew him not, yet they know whence their spiritual life comes, and whither it tends, and go upon sure grounds.



2. That they are very incompetent judges of him, and of his doctrine, and not to be regarded. (1.) Because they were *ignorant*, willingly and resolutely ignorant: *You cannot tell whence I came, and whither I go*. To what purpose is it to talk with those who know nothing of the matter, nor desire to know? He had told them of his coming from heaven and returning to heaven, but it was *foolishness to them*, they received it not; it was what the *brutish man knows not*, Ps. xcii. 6. They took upon them to judge of that which they did not understand, which lay quite out of the road of their acquaintance. Those that despise Christ's dominions and dignities speak evil of what they *know not*, Jude, v. 8, 10. (2.) Because they were *partial* (v. 15): *You judge after the flesh*. When fleshly wisdom gives the rule of judgment, and outward appearances only are given in evidence, and the case decided according to them, then men *judge after the flesh*; and when the consideration of a secular interest turns the scale in judging of spiritual matters, when we judge in favour of that which pleases the carnal mind, and recommends us to a carnal world, we judge after the flesh; and the judgment cannot be right when the rule is wrong. The Jews judged of Christ and his gospel by outward appearances, and, because he appeared so mean, thought it impossible he should be the light of the world; as if the sun under a cloud were no sun. (3.) Because they were *unjust and unfair* towards him, intimated in this: "*I judge no man*; I neither make nor meddle with your political affairs, nor does my doctrine or practice at all intrench upon, or interfere with, your civil rights or secular powers." He thus *judged no man*. Now, if he did not *war after the flesh*, it was very unreasonable for them to *judge him after the flesh*, and to treat him as an offender against the civil government. Or, "*I judge no man*," that is, "not now in my first coming, that is deferred till I come again," ch. iii. 17. *Prima dispensatio Christi medicinalis est, non judicialis*—The first coming of Christ was for the purpose of administering, not justice, but medicine.

3. That his testimony of himself was sufficiently supported and corroborated by the testimony of his Father *with him and for him* (v. 16): *And yet, if I judge, my judgment is true*. He did in his doctrine judge (ch. ix. 39), though not *politically*. Consider him then,

(1.) As a judge, and his own judgment was valid: "*If I judge*, I who have authority to execute judgments, I to whom all things are delivered, I who am the Son of God, and have the Spirit of God, if I judge, *my judgment is true*, of incontestable rectitude and uncontrollable authority, Rom. ii. 2. *If I should judge*, my judgment must be true, and then you would be condemned; but the judgment-day is not yet come, you are not yet to be condemned, but spared, and therefore now *I judge no man*;" so Chrysostom.

Now that which makes his judgment unexceptionable is, [1.] His Father's concurrence with him: *I am not alone, but I and the Father*. He had the Father's concurring counsels to direct; as he was with the Father before the world in forming the counsels, so the Father was with him in the world in prosecuting and executing those counsels, and never left him *inops consilii*—without advice, Isa. xi. 2. All the counsels of peace (and of war too) were between them both, Zech. vi. 13. He had also the Father's concurring power to authorize and confirm what he did; see Ps. lxxxix. 21, &c. Isa. xlii. 1. He did not act *separately*, but in his own name and his Father's, and *by the authority aforesaid*, ch. v. 17, and xiv. 9, 10. [2.] His Father's commission to him: "It is the Father that sent me." Note, God will go along with those that he sends; see Exod. iii. 10, 12: *Come, and I will send thee, and certainly I will be with thee*. Now, if Christ had a commission from the Father, and the Father's presence with him in all his administrations, no doubt his judgment was true and valid; no exception lay against it, no appeal lay from it.

(2.) Look upon him as a witness, and now he appeared no otherwise (having not as yet taken the throne of judgment), and as such his testimony was true and unexceptionable; this he shows, v. 17, 18, where,

[1.] He quotes a maxim of the Jewish law, v. 17. *That the testimony of two men is true*. Not as if it were always true in itself, for many a time hand has been joined in hand to bear a false testimony, 1 Kings xxi. 10. But it is allowed as sufficient evidence upon which to ground a verdict (*verum dictum*), and if nothing appear to the contrary it is taken for granted to be true. Reference is here had to that law (Deut. xvii. 6), *At the mouth of two witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death*. And see Deut. ix. 15; Num. xxxv. 30. It was in favour of life that in capital cases two witnesses were required, as with us in case of treason. See Heb. vi. 18.

[2.] He applies this to the case in hand (v. 18): *I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me*. Behold two witnesses! Though in human courts, where two witnesses are required, the criminal or candidate is not admitted to be a witness for himself; yet in a matter purely divine, which can be proved only by a divine testimony, and God himself must be the witness, if the formality of two or three witnesses be insisted on, there can be no other than the eternal Father, the eternal Son of the Father, and the eternal Spirit. Now if the testimony of two distinct persons, that are men, and therefore may deceive or be deceived, is conclusive, much more ought the testimony of the Son of God concerning himself, backed with the testimony of his Father concerning him, to command assent; see 1 John v. 7 9—11. Now this proves

not only that the Father and the Son are two distinct persons (for their respective testimonies are here spoken of as the testimonies of two several persons), but that these two are one, not only one in their testimony, but equal in power and glory, and therefore the same in substance. St. Austin here takes occasion to caution his hearers against Sabellianism on the one hand, which confounded the persons in the Godhead, and Arianism on the other, which denied the Godhead of the Son and Spirit. *Alius est filius, et alius pater, non tamen aliud, sed hoc ipsum est et pater, et filius, scilicet unus Deus est*—*The Son is one Person, and the Father is another; they do not, however, constitute two Beings, but the Father is the same Being that the Son is, that is, the only true God.* Tract. 36, in Joann. Christ here speaks of himself and the Father as witnesses to the world, giving in evidence to the reason and conscience of the children of men, whom he deals with as men. And these witnesses to the world now will in the great day be witnesses against those that persist in unbelief, and their word will judge men.

This was the sum of the first conference between Christ and these carnal Jews, in the conclusion of which we are told how their tongues were let loose, and their hands tied.

*First*, How their tongues were let loose (such was the malice of hell) to cavil at his discourse, v. 19. Though in what he said there appeared nothing of human policy or artifice, but a divine security, yet they set themselves to cross questions with him. None so incurably blind as those that resolve they will not see. Observe,

a. How they evaded the conviction with a cavil: *Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father?* They might easily have understood, by the tenour of this and his other discourses, that when he spoke of his Father he meant no other than God himself; yet they pretend to understand him of a common person, and, since he appeals to his testimony, they bid him call his witness, and challenge him, if he can, to produce him: *Where is thy Father?* Thus, as Christ said of them (v. 15), they judge after the flesh. Perhaps they hereby intend a reflection upon the meanness and obscurity of his family: *Where is thy Father*, that he should be fit to give evidence in such a case as this? Thus they turned it off with a taunt, when they could not resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke.

b. How he evaded the cavil with a further conviction; he did not tell them where his Father was, but charged them with wilful ignorance: *"You neither know me nor my Father.* It is to no purpose to discourse to you about divine things, who talk of them as blind men do of colours. Poor creatures! you know nothing of the matter" (a.) He charges them with ignorance of God: *"You know not my Father.* In Judah was God

known (Ps. lxxvi. 1); they had some knowledge of him as the God that made the world, but their eyes were darkened that they could not see the light of his glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ. The little children of the Christian church know the Father, know him as a Father (1 John ii. 13); but these rulers of the Jews did not, because they would not so know him. (b.) He shows them the true cause of their ignorance of God: *If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.* The reason why men are ignorant of God is because they are unacquainted with Jesus Christ. Did we know Christ, [a.] In knowing him we should know the Father, of whose person he is the express image, ch. xiv. 9. Chrysostom proves hence the Godhead of Christ, and his equality with his Father. We cannot say, "He that knows a man knows an angel," or, "He that knows a creature knows the Creator;" but he that knows Christ knows the Father. [b.] By him we should be instructed in the knowledge of God, and introduced into an acquaintance with him. If we knew Christ better, we should know the Father better; but, where the Christian religion is slighted and opposed, natural religion will soon be lost and laid aside. Deism makes way for atheism. Those become vain in their imaginations concerning God that will not learn of Christ.

*Secondly*, See how their hands were tied, though their tongues were thus let loose; such was the power of Heaven to restrain the malice of hell. These words spoke Jesus, these bold words, these words of conviction and reproof, in the treasury, an apartment of the temple, where, to be sure, the chief priests, whose gain was their godliness, were mostly resident, attending the business of the revenue. Christ taught in the temple, sometimes in one part, sometimes in another, as he saw occasion. Now the priests who had so great a concern in the temple, and looked upon it as their demesne, might easily, with the assistance of the janizaries that were at their beck, either have seized him and exposed him to the rage of the mob, and that punishment which they called the beating of the rebels; or, at least, have silenced him, and stopped his mouth there, as Amos, though tolerated in the land of Judah, was forbidden to prophesy in the king's chapel, Amos, vii. 12, 13. Yet even in the temple, where they had him in their reach, no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come. See here, 1. The restraint laid upon his persecutors by an invisible power; none of them durst meddle with him. God can set bounds to the wrath of men, as he does to the waves of the sea. Let us not therefore fear danger in the way of duty; for God hath Satan and all his instruments in a chain. 2. The reason of this restraint: *His hour was not yet come.* The frequent mention of this intimates how much the time of our departure out of the



world depends upon the fixed counsel and decree of God. *It will come, it is coming; not yet come, but it is at hand.* Our enemies cannot hasten it any sooner, nor our friends delay it any longer, than the time appointed of the Father, which is very comfortable to every good man, who can look up and say with pleasure, *My times are in thy hands; and better there than in our own.* His hour was not yet come, because his work was not done, nor his testimony finished. To all God's purposes *there is a time.*

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. 22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. 23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. 25 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even *the same* that I said unto you from the beginning. 26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. 27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. 28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. 29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. 30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.

Christ here gives fair warning to the careless unbelieving Jews to consider what would be the consequence of their infidelity, that they might prevent it before it was too late; for he spoke words of terror as well as words of grace. Observe here,

I. The wrath threatened (v. 21): *Jesus said again unto them* that which might be likely to do them good. He continued to teach, in kindness to those few who received his doctrine, though there were many that resisted it, which is an example to ministers to go on with their work, notwithstanding opposition,

because a remnant shall be saved. Here Christ changes his voice; he had *pip'd to them* in the offers of his grace, and they *had not danced*; now he mourns to them in the denunciations of his wrath, to try if they would lament. He said, *I go my way, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. Whither I go you cannot come.* Every word is terrible, and bespeaks spiritual judgments, which are the sorest of all judgments; worse than war, pestilence, and captivity, which the Old-Testament prophets denounced. Four things are here threatened against the Jews.

1. Christ's departure from them: *I go my way*, that is, "It shall not be long before I go; you need not take so much pains to drive me from you, I shall go of myself." They said to him, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*; and he takes them at their word; but woe to those from whom Christ departs. Ichabod, the glory is gone, our defence is departed, when Christ goes. Christ frequently warned them of his departure before he left them: he *bade often farewell*, as one *loth to depart*, and willing to be invited, and that would have them *stir up themselves to take hold on him*.

2. Their enmity to the true Messiah, and their fruitless and infatuated enquiries after another Messiah when he was gone away, which were both their sin and their punishment: *You shall seek me*, which intimates either, (1.) Their enmity to the true Christ: "You shall seek to ruin my interest, by persecuting my doctrine and followers, with a fruitless design to root them out." This was a continual vexation and torment to themselves, made them incurably *ill-natured*, and brought *wrath upon them* (God's and their own) to the uttermost. Or, (2.) Their enquiries after false Christs: "You shall continue your expectations of the Messiah, and be the self-perplexing seekers of a Christ to come, when he is already come;" like the Sodomites, who, being struck with blindness, wearied themselves to find the door. See Rom. ix. 31, 32.

3. Their final impenitency: *You shall die in your sins*. Here is an error in all our English Bibles, even the old bishops' translation, and that of Geneva (the Rhemists only excepted), for all the Greek copies have it in the singular number, *ἐν τῇ ἀμαρτία ὑμῶν—in your sin*, so all the Latin versions; and Calvin has a note upon the difference between this and v. 24, where it is plural, *ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις*, that here it is meant especially of the sin of unbelief, *in hoc peccato vestro—in this sin of yours*. Note, Those that live in unbelief are for ever undone if they die in unbelief. Or, it may be understood in general, *You shall die in your iniquity*, as Ezek. iii. 19, and xxxiii. 9. Many that have long lived in sin are, through grace, saved by a timely repentance from *dying in sin*; but for those who go out of this world of probation into that of retribution under the guilt of sin unpardoned, and the power

of sin unbroken, there remaineth no relief: salvation itself cannot save them, Job xx. 11; Ezek. xxxii. 27.

4. Their eternal separation from Christ and all happiness in him: *Whither I go you cannot come*. When Christ left the world, he went to a state of perfect happiness; he went to paradise. Thither he took the penitent thief with him, that did not die in his sins; but the impenitent not only *shall not* come to him, but they *cannot*; it is morally impossible, for heaven would not be heaven to those that die unsanctified and unmeet for it. You cannot come, because you have no *right* to enter into that Jerusalem, Rev. xxii. 14. *Whither I go you cannot come*, to fetch me thence, so Dr. Whitby; and the same is the comfort of all good Christians, that, when they get to heaven, they will be out of the reach of their enemies' malice.

II. The jest they made of this threatening. Instead of trembling at this word, they bantered it, and turned it into ridicule (v. 22): *Will he kill himself?* See here, 1. What slight thoughts they had of Christ's threatenings; they could make themselves and one another merry with them, as those that mocked the messengers of the Lord, and turned the *burden of the word of the Lord* into a *by-word*, and *precept upon precept, line upon line*, into a merry song, Isa. xxviii. 13. But *be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong*. 2. What ill thoughts they had of Christ's meaning, as if he had an inhuman design upon his own life, to avoid the indignities done him, like Saul. This is indeed (say they) to go whither we cannot follow him, for we will never *kill ourselves*. Thus they make him not only such a one as themselves, but worse; yet in the calamities brought by the Romans upon the Jews many of them in discontent and despair did kill themselves. They had put a much more favourable construction upon this word of his (ch. vii. 34, 35): *Will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles?* But see how indulged malice grows more and more malicious.

III. The confirmation of what he had said.

1. He had said, *Whither I go you cannot come*, and here he gives the reason for this (v. 23): *You are from beneath, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world*. You are *ἐκ τῶν κάτω*—of those things which are beneath; noting, not so much their rise from beneath as their affection to these lower things: You are *in with these things*, as those that belong to them; how can you come where I go, when your spirit and disposition are so directly contrary to mine?" See here, (1.) What the *spirit of the Lord Jesus* was—not of *this world*, but from *above*. He was perfectly dead to the wealth of the world, the ease of the body, and the praise of men, and was wholly taken up with divine and heavenly things; and none shall be with him but those who are *born from above* and have their *conversation in heaven*. (2.) How

contrary to this *their spirit* was: "*You are from beneath*, and of *this world*." The Pharisees were of a carnal worldly spirit; and what communion could Christ have with them?

2. He had said, *You shall die in your sins*, and here he stands to it: "Therefore I said, You shall die in your sins, because *you are from beneath*;" and he gives this further reason for it, *If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins*, v. 24. See here, (1.) What we are required to believe: *that I am he*, ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶμι—that I am, which is one of God's names, Exod. iii. 14. It was the Son of God that there said, *Ehejeh asher Ehejeh—I will be what I will be*; for the deliverance of Israel was but a figure of good things to come, but now he saith, "*I am he*;" he that should come, he that you expect the Messias to be, that you would have me to be to you. I am more than the bare name of the Messiah; I do not only call myself so, but *I am he*." True faith does not *amuse* the soul with an empty sound of words, but *affects* it with the doctrine of Christ's mediation, as a real thing that has real effects. (2.) How necessary it is that we believe this. If we have not this faith, *we shall die in our sins*; for the matter is so settled that without this faith, [1.] We cannot be saved from the power of sin while we live, and therefore shall certainly continue in it to the last. Nothing but the *doctrine* of Christ's grace will be an argument powerful enough, and none but the *Spirit* of Christ's grace will be an agent powerful enough, to turn us from sin to God; and that Spirit is given, and that doctrine given, to be effectual to those only who believe in Christ: so that, if Satan be not by faith dispossessed, he has a lease of the soul for its life; if Christ do not *cure us*, our case is desperate, and we shall *die in our sins*. [2.] Without faith we cannot be saved from the punishment of sin when we die, for the *wrath of God* remains upon them that believe not, Mark xvi. 16. Unbelief is the damning sin; it is a sin against the remedy. Now this implies the great gospel promise: *If we believe that Christ is he*, and receive him accordingly, *we shall not die in our sins*. The law saith absolutely to all, as Christ said (v. 21), *You shall die in your sins*, for we are all guilty before God; but the gospel is a defeasance of the obligation upon condition of believing. The curse of the law is vacated and annulled to all that submit to the grace of the gospel. Believers die in Christ, in his love, in his arms, and so are saved from dying in *their sins*.

IV. Here is a further discourse concerning himself, occasioned by his requiring faith in himself as the condition of salvation, v. 25—29. Observe,

1. The question which the Jews put to him (v. 25): *Who art thou?* This they asked tauntingly, and not with any desire to be instructed. He had said You must believe



that *I am he*. By his not saying expressly who he was, he plainly intimated that in his person he was such a one as could not be described by any, and in his office such a one as was expected by all that looked for redemption in Israel; yet this awful manner of speaking, which had so much significance in it, they turned to his reproach, as if he knew not what to say of himself: "*Who art thou, that we must with an implicit faith believe in thee, that thou art some mighty HE, we know not who or what, nor are worthy to know?*"

2. His answer to this question, wherein he directs them three ways for information:—

(1.) He refers them to *what he had said* all along: "*Do you ask who I am? Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.*" The original here is a little intricate, τὴν ἀρχὴν ὅ τε καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν, which some read thus: *I am the beginning, which also I speak unto you*. So Austin takes it. Christ is called *Ἀρχὴ*—the beginning (Col. i. 18; Rev. i. 8; xxi. 6; iii. 14), and so it agrees with v. 24, *I am he*. Compare Isa. xli. 4: *I am the first, I am he*. Those who object that it is the accusative case, and therefore not properly answering to τίς εἶ, must undertake to construe by grammar rules that *pa.allel* expression, Rev. i. 8, ὁ ἦν. But most interpreters agree with our version, *Do you ask who I am?* [1.] *I am the same that I said to you from the beginning* of time in the scriptures of the Old-Testament, the same that from the beginning was said to be the *Seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head*, the same that in all the ages of the church was the Mediator of the covenant, and the faith of the patriarchs. [2.] *From the beginning* of my public ministry. The account he had already given of himself he resolved to abide by; he had declared himself to be the *Son of God* (ch. v. 17), to be the Christ (ch. iv. 26), and the bread of life, and had proposed himself as the object of that faith which is necessary to salvation, and to this he refers them for an answer to their question. Christ is *one with himself*; what he had said from the beginning, he saith still. His is an *everlasting gospel*.

(2.) He refers them to his Father's judgment, and the instructions he had from him (v. 26): "*I have many things, more than you think of, to say, and in them to judge of you*. But why should I trouble myself any further with you? I know very well that *he who sent me is true*, and will stand by me, and bear me out, for *I speak to the world* (to which I am sent as an ambassador) *those things*, all those and those only, *which I have heard of him*." Here,

[1.] He suppresses his accusation of them. He had *many things* to charge them with, and many evidences to produce against them; but for the present he had said enough. Note, Whatever discoveries of sin are made to us, he that searches the heart has still more to judge of us, 1 John iii. 20. How much

soever God reckons with sinners in this world there is still a further reckoning yet behind, Deut. xxxii. 34. Let us learn hence not to be forward to say all we can say, even against the worst of men; we may have many things to say, by way of censure, which yet it is better to leave *unsaid*, for what is it to us?

[2.] He enters his appeal against them to his Father: *He that sent me*. Here two things comfort him:—*First*, That he had been true to his Father, and to the trust reposed in him: *I speak to the world* (for his gospel was to be preached to every creature) *those things which I have heard of him*. Being given for a witness to the people (Isa. lv. 4), he was *Amen, a faithful witness*, Rev. iii. 14. He did not conceal his doctrine, but spoke it to the world (being of common concern, it was to be of common notice); nor did he change or alter it, nor vary from the instructions he received from him that sent him. *Secondly*, That his Father would be true to him; true to the promise that he would make his mouth like a sharp sword; true to his purpose concerning him, which was a decree (Ps. ii. 7); true to the threatenings of his wrath against those that should reject him. Though he should not accuse them to his Father, yet the Father, who sent him, would undoubtedly reckon with them, and would be true to what he had said (Deut. xviii. 19), that whosoever would not hearken to that prophet whom God would raise up he would require it of him. Christ would not accuse them; "for," saith he, "he that sent me is true, and will pass judgment on them, though I should not demand judgment against them." Thus, when he lets fall the present prosecution, he binds them over to the judgment-day, when it will be too late to dispute what they will not now be persuaded to believe. *I, as a deaf man, heard not; for thou wilt hear*, Ps. xxxviii. 13, 15. Upon this part of our Saviour's discourse the evangelist has a melancholy remark (v. 27): *They understood not that he spoke to them of the Father*. See here, 1. The power of Satan to blind the minds of those who believe not. Though Christ spoke so plainly of God as his Father in heaven, yet they did not understand whom he meant, but thought he spoke of some father he had in Galilee. Thus the plainest things are riddles and parables to those who are resolved to hold fast their prejudices; day and night are alike to the blind. 2. The reason why the threatenings of the word make so little impression upon the minds of sinners; it is because they understand not whose the wrath is that is revealed in them. When Christ told them of the truth of him that sent him, as a warning to them to prepare for his judgment, which is according to truth, they slighted the warning, because they understood not to whose judgment it was that they made themselves obnoxious.

(3.) He refers them to *their own conviction*

hereafter, v. 28, 29. He finds they will not understand him, and therefore adjourns the trial till further evidence should come in; they that *will not see shall see*, Isa. xxvi. 11. Now observe here,

[1.] *What they should ere long be convinced of*: "*You shall know that I am he, that Jesus is the true Messiah. Whether you will own it or no before men, you shall be made to know it in your own consciences, the convictions of which, though you may stifle, yet you cannot baffle: that I am he, not that you represent me to be, but he that I preach myself to be, he that should come!*" Two things they should be convinced of, in order to this:—*First*, That he did nothing of himself, not of himself as man, of himself alone, of himself without the Father, with whom he was *one*. He does not hereby derogate from his own inherent power, but only denies their charge against him as a *false prophet*; for of false prophets it is said that they prophesied *out of their own hearts*, and followed *their own spirits*. *Secondly*, That as his Father taught him so he spoke *these things*, that he was not *αὐτοδίδακτος*—*selftaught*, but *θεοδίδακτος*—*taught of God*. The doctrine he preached was the counterpart of the counsels of God, with which he was intimately acquainted; *καθὼς ἰδίδαξε, ταῦτα λαλῶ*—I speak those things, not only *which* he taught me, but as he taught me, with the same divine power and authority.

[2.] *When they should be convinced of this*: *When you have lifted up the Son of man*, lifted him up upon the cross, as the brazen serpent upon the pole (*ch. iii. 14*), as the sacrifices under the law (for Christ is the great sacrifice), which, when they were offered, were said to be *elevated*, or *lifted up*; hence the burnt-offerings, the most ancient and honourable of all, were called *elevations* (*Gnoloth* from *Gnolah*, *ascendit—he ascended*), and in many other offerings they used the significant ceremony of *heaving* the sacrifice up, and *moving* it before the Lord; thus was Christ *lifted up*. Or the expression denotes that his death was his exaltation. They that put him to death thought thereby for ever to have *sunk* him and his interest, but it proved to be the advancement of both, *ch. xii. 24*. When the Son of man was *crucified*, the Son of man was *glorified*. Christ had called his dying his *going away*; here he calls it his being *lifted up*; thus the death of the saints, as it is their departure out of this world, so it is their advancement to a better. Observe, He speaks of those he is now talking with as the *instruments* of his death: *when you have lifted up the Son of man*; not that they were to be the *priests* to offer him up (no, that was his own act, he *offered up himself*), but they would be his betrayers and murderers; see *Acts ii. 23*. They *lifted him up* to the cross, but then he *lifted up* himself to his Father. Observe with what tenderness and mildness Christ here speaks to those who he certainly

knew would put him to death, to teach us not to hate or seek the hurt of any, though we may have reason to think they hate us and seek our hurt. Now, Christ speaks of his death as that which would be a powerful conviction of the infidelity of the Jews. *When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know this*. And why then? *First*, Because careless and unthinking people are often taught the worth of mercies by the want of them, *Luke xvii. 22*. *Secondly*, The guilt of their sin in putting Christ to death would so awaken their consciences that they would be put upon serious enquiries after a Saviour, and then would know that Jesus was he who alone could save them. And so it proved, when, being told that with wicked hands they had *crucified and slain* the Son of God, they cried out, *What shall we do?* and were made to know assuredly that this Jesus was *Lord and Christ*, *Acts ii. 36*. *Thirdly*, There would be such signs and wonders attending his death, and the *lifting of him up* from death in his resurrection, as would give a stronger proof of his being the Messiah than any that had been yet given: and multitudes were hereby brought to believe that Jesus is the Christ, who had before contradicted and opposed him. *Fourthly*, By the death of Christ the pouring out of the Spirit was purchased, who would convince the world that *Jesus is he*, *ch. xvi. 7, 8*. *Fifthly*, The judgments which the Jews brought upon themselves, by putting Christ to death, which filled up the measure of their iniquity, were a sensible conviction to the most hardened among them that *Jesus was he*. Christ had often foretold that desolation as the just punishment of their invincible unbelief, and *when it came to pass (lo, it did come)* they could not but know that the great *prophet had been among them*, *Ezek. xxiii. 33*.

[3.] What supported our Lord Jesus in the mean time (v. 29): *He that sent me is with me*, in my whole undertaking; *for the Father* (the fountain and first spring of this affair, from whom as its great cause and author it is derived) *hath not left me alone*, to manage it myself, hath not deserted the business nor me in the prosecution of it, for *do I always those things that please him*. Here is,

*First*, The assurance which Christ had of his Father's presence with him, which includes both a divine power going along with him to enable him for his work, and a divine favour manifested to him to encourage him in it. *He that sent me is with me*, *Isa. xlii. 1*; *Psal. lxxxix. 21*. This greatly emboldens our faith in Christ and our reliance upon his word that he had, and knew he had, his Father with him, to confirm the word of his servant, *Isa. xlii. 26*. The King of kings accompanied his own ambassador, to attest his mission and assist his management, and never left him alone, either solitary or weak; it also aggravated the wickedness of those that opposed him, and was an intimation to them of



the *premunire* they ran themselves into by resisting him, for thereby they were found *fighters against God*. How easily soever they might think to crush him and run him down, let them know he had one to back him with whom it is the greatest madness that can be to contend.

Secondly, The ground of this assurance: For I do always those things that please him. That is, 1. That great affair in which our Lord Jesus was continually engaged was an affair which the Father that sent him was highly well pleased with. His whole undertaking is called the *pleasure of the Lord* (Isa. liii. 10), because of the counsels of the eternal mind about it, and the complacency of the eternal mind in it. 2. His management of that affair was in nothing displeasing to his Father; in executing his commission he punctually observed all his instructions, and did in nothing vary from them. No mere man since the fall could say such a word as this (for in many things we offend all) but our Lord Jesus never offended his Father in any thing, but, as became him, he fulfilled all righteousness. This was necessary to the validity and value of the sacrifice he was to offer up; for if he had in any thing displeased the Father himself, and so had had any sin of his own to answer for, the Father could not have been pleased with him as a propitiation for our sins; but such a priest and such a sacrifice became us as was perfectly pure and spotless. We may likewise learn hence that God's servants may then expect God's presence with them when they choose and do those things that please him, Isa. lxvi. 4, 5.

V. Here is the good effect which this discourse of Christ's had upon some of his hearers (v. 30): As he spoke these words many believed on him. Note, 1. Though multitudes perish in their unbelief, yet there is a remnant according to the election of grace, who believe to the saving of the soul. If Israel, the whole body of the people, be not gathered, yet there are those of them in whom Christ will be glorious, Isa. xlix. 5. This the apostle insists upon, to reconcile the Jews' rejection with the promises made unto their fathers. There is a remnant, Rcm. xi. 5. 2. The words of Christ, and particularly his threatening words, are made effectual by the grace of God to bring in poor souls to believe in him. When Christ told them that if they believed not they should die in their sins, and never get to heaven, they thought it was time to look about them, Rom. i. 16, 18. 3. Sometimes there is a wide door opened, and an effectual one, even where there are many adversaries. Christ will carry on his work, though the heathen rage. The gospel sometimes gains great victories where it meets with great opposition. Let this encourage God's ministers to preach the gospel, though it be with much contention, for they shall not labour in vain. Many may be secretly brought home to God by those endeavours which are openly contradicted

and cavilled at by men of corrupt minds. Austin has an affectionate ejaculation in his lecture upon these words: *Utinam et, me loquenti, multi credant: non in me, sed mecum in eo—I wish that when I speak, many may believe, not on me, but with me on him.*

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. 37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

We have in these verses,

I. A comfortable doctrine laid down concerning the *spiritual liberty* of Christ's disciples, intended for the encouragement of those Jews that believed. Christ, knowing that his doctrine began to work upon some of his hearers, and perceiving that virtue had gone out of him, turned his discourse from the proud Pharisees, and addressed himself to those weak believers. When he had denounced wrath against those that were hardened in unbelief, then he spoke comfort to those few feeble Jews that believed in him. See here,

1. How graciously the Lord Jesus looks to those that tremble at his word, and are ready to receive it; he has something to say to those who have hearing ears, and will not pass by those who set themselves in his way, without speaking to them.

2. How carefully he cherishes the beginnings of grace, and meets those that are coming towards him. These Jews that believed were yet but weak; but Christ did not therefore cast them off, for he gathers the lambs in his arms. When faith is in its infancy, he has knees to prevent it, breasts for it to suck, that it may not die from the womb. In what he said to them, we have two things, which he saith to all that should at any time believe:—

(1.) The character of a true disciple of Christ: If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed. When they believed on him, as the great prophet, they gave up themselves to be his disciples. Now, at their

entrance into his school, he lays down this for a settled rule, that he would own none for his disciples but those that *continued in his word*. [1.] It is implied that there are many who profess themselves Christ's disciples who are not his *disciples indeed*, but only in show and name. [2.] It highly concerns those that are not *strong in faith* to see to it that they be *sound in the faith*, that, though not disciples of the highest form, they are nevertheless *disciples indeed*. [3.] Those who seem willing to be Christ's disciples ought to be told that they had as good never come to him, unless they come with a resolution by his grace to abide by him. Let those who have thoughts of covenanting with Christ have no thoughts of reserving a power of revocation. Children are sent to school, and bound apprentices, only for a few years; but those only are Christ's who are willing to be bound to him for the term of life. [4.] Those only that *continue in Christ's word* shall be accepted as his *disciples indeed*, that adhere to his word in every instance without partiality, and abide by it to the end without apostasy. It is *μενειν*—to dwell in Christ's word, as a man does at home, which is his centre, and rest, and refuge. Our converse with the word and conformity to it must be constant. If we continue disciples to the last, then, and not otherwise, we approve ourselves *disciples indeed*.

(2.) The privilege of a true disciple of Christ. Here are two precious promises made to those who thus approve themselves disciples indeed, *v. 32*.

[1.] "*You shall know the truth*, shall know all that truth which it is needful and profitable for you to know, and shall be more confirmed in the belief of it, shall know the certainty of it." Note, *First*, Even those who are true believers, and disciples indeed, yet may be, and are, much in the dark concerning many things which they should know. God's children are but children, and understand and speak as children. Did we not need to be taught, we should not need to be disciples. *Secondly*, It is a very great privilege to *know the truth*, to know the particular truths which we are to believe, in their mutual dependences and connections, and the grounds and reasons of our belief,—to know what is truth and what proves it to be so. *Thirdly*, It is a gracious promise of Christ, to all who continue in his word, that they shall know the truth as far as is needful and profitable for them. Christ's scholars are sure to be well taught.

[2.] *The truth shall make you free*; that is, *First*, The truth which Christ teaches tends to make men free, Isa. lxi. 1. Justification makes us free from the guilt of sin, by which we were bound over to the judgment of God, and bound under amazing fears; sanctification makes us free from the bondage of corruption, by which we were restrained from that service which is perfect freedom, and con-

strained to that which is perfect slavery. Gospel truth frees us from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and the more grievous burdens of the traditions of the elders. It makes us *free from our spiritual enemies*, free in the service of God, free to the privileges of sons, and free of the Jerusalem which is from above, which is free. *Secondly*, The knowing, entertaining, and believing, of this truth does actually *make us free*, free from prejudices, mistakes, and false notions, than which nothing more *enslaves and entangles* the soul, free from the dominion of lust and passion; and restores the soul to the government of itself, by reducing it into obedience to its Creator. The mind, by admitting the truth of Christ in the light and power, is vastly enlarged, and has scope and compass given it, is greatly elevated and raised above things of sense, and never acts with so true a liberty as when it acts under a divine command, 2 Cor. iii. 17. The enemies of Christianity pretend to *free thinking*, whereas really those are the freest reasonings that are guided by faith, and those are men of *free thought* whose thoughts are captivated and brought into obedience to Christ.

II. The offence which the carnal Jews took at this doctrine, and their objection against it. Though it was a doctrine that brought glad tidings of liberty to the captives, yet they cavilled at it, *v. 33*. The Pharisees grudged this comfortable word to those that believed, the standers by, who had *no part nor lot in this matter*; they thought themselves reflected upon and affronted by the gracious charter of liberty granted to those that believed, and therefore with a great deal of pride and envy they answered him, "*We Jews are Abraham's seed*, and therefore are *free-born*, and have not lost our birthright-freedom; *we were never in bondage to any man*; how sayest thou then, to us Jews, *You shall be made free*?" See here,

1. What it was that they were grieved at; it was an *innuendo* in those words, *You shall be made free*, as if the Jewish church and nation were in some sort of bondage, which reflected on the Jews in general, and as if all that did not believe in Christ continued in that bondage, which reflected on the Pharisees in particular. Note, The privileges of the faithful are the envy and vexation of unbelievers, Ps. cxii. 10.

2. What it was that they alleged against it; whereas Christ intimated that they needed to be made free, they urge, (1.) "*We are Abraham's seed*, and Abraham was a *prince and a great man*; though we live in Canaan, we are not descended from Canaan, nor under his doom, a *servant of servants shall he be*; we hold in *frank-almoign—free alms*, and not in *villanage—by a servile tenure*." It is common for a sinking decaying family to boast of the glory and dignity of its ancestors, and to borrow honour from that name to which they repay disgrace; so the Jews here did. But



this was not all. Abraham was in covenant with God, and his children by his right, Rom. xi. 28. Now that covenant, no doubt, was a free charter, and invested them with privileges not consistent with a state of slavery, Rom. ix. 4. And therefore they thought they had no occasion with so *great a sum* as they reckoned faith in Christ to be to *obtain this freedom*, when they were thus free-born. Note, It is the common fault and folly of those that have pious parentage and education to trust to their privilege, and boast of it, as if it would atone for the want of real holiness. They were Abraham's seed, but what would this avail them, when we find one in hell that could call Abraham father? Saving benefits are not, like common privileges, conveyed by *entail* to us and our issue, nor can a title to heaven be made by *descent*, nor may we claim as *heirs at law*, by making out our pedigree; our title is purely by purchase, not our own but our Redeemer's for us, under certain provisos and limitations, which if we do not observe it will not avail us to be Abraham's seed. Thus many, when they are pressed with the necessity of regeneration, turn it off with this, *We are the church's children*; but they are not all Israel that are of Israel. (2.) *We were never in bondage to any man*. Now observe, [1.] How false this allegation was. I wonder now they could have the assurance to say a thing in the face of a congregation which was so notoriously *untrue*. Were not the seed of Abraham in bondage to the Egyptians? Were they not often in bondage to the neighbouring nations in the time of the judges? Were they not seventy years captives in Babylon? Nay, were they not at this time tributaries to the Romans, and, though not in a *personal*, yet in a *national* bondage to them, and groaning to be made free? And yet, to confront Christ, they have the impudence to say, *We were never in bondage*. Thus they would expose Christ to the ill-will both of the Jews, who were very jealous for the honour of their liberty, and of the Romans, who would not be thought to enslave the nations they conquered. [2.] How foolish the application was. Christ had spoken of a liberty wherewith the *truth* would make them free, which must be meant of a *spiritual* liberty, for truth as it is the *enriching*, so it is the *enfranchising* of the mind, and the *enlarging* of that from the captivity of error and prejudice; and yet they plead against the offer of *spiritual* liberty that they were never in *corporal* thralldom, as if, because they were never in bondage to any *man*, they were never in bondage to any *lust*. Note, Carnal hearts are sensible of no other grievances than those that molest the body and injure their secular affairs. Talk to them of encroachments upon their civil liberty and property,—tell them of waste committed upon their lands, or damage done to their houses,—and they understand you very well, and can give you a sensible answer; the thing touches them and affects them. But

discourse to them of the bondage of sin, a captivity to Satan, and a liberty by Christ,—tell them of wrong done to their precious souls, and the hazard of their eternal welfare,—and you bring certain strange things to their ears; they say of it (as those did, Ezek. xx. 49), *Doth he not speak parables?* This was much like the blunder Nicodemus made about being born again.

III. Our Saviour's vindication of his doctrine from these objections, and the further explication of it, v. 34—37, where he does these four things:—

1. He shows that, notwithstanding their civil liberties and their visible church-membership, yet it was possible that they might be in a state of bondage (v. 34): *Whosoever commits sin*, though he be of Abraham's seed, and was never in bondage to any man, is the servant of sin. Observe, Christ does not upbraid them with the falsehood of their plea, or their present bondage, but further explains what he had said for their edification. Thus ministers should with meekness instruct those that oppose them, that they may *recover themselves*, not with passion provoke them to entangle themselves yet more. Now here,

(1.) The preface is very solemn: *Verily, verily, I say unto you*; an awful asseveration, which our Saviour often used, to command a reverent attention and a ready assent. The style of the prophets was, *Thus saith the Lord*, for they were *faithful as servants*; but Christ, being a Son, speaks in his own name: *I say unto you*, I the *Amen*, the faithful witness, he pawns his veracity upon it. "I say it to you, who boast of your relation to Abraham, as if that would save you."

(2.) The truth is of universal concern, though here delivered upon a particular occasion: *Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin*, and sadly needs to be made free. A state of sin is a state of bondage. [1.] See who it is on whom this brand is fastened—on him that *commits sin*, *πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν ἁμαρτίαν*—every one that makes sin. There is not a *just man* upon earth, that *lives*, and *sins not*; yet every one that sins is not a servant of sin, for then God would have no servants; but he that *makes sin*, that *makes choice* of sin, prefers the way of wickedness before the way of holiness (Jer. xlv. 16, 17),—that *makes a covenant* with sin, enters into league with it, and *makes a marriage* with it,—that *makes contrivances* of sin, *makes provision* for the flesh, and *devises iniquity*,—and that *makes a custom* of sin, who walks after the flesh, and *makes a trade* of sin. [2.] See what the brand is which Christ fastens upon those that thus *commit sin*. He stigmatizes them, gives them a mark of servitude. They are *servants of sin*, imprisoned under the guilt of sin, under an arrest, in hold for it, *concluded under sin*, and they are subject to the power of sin. He is a *servant of sin*, that is, he makes himself so, and is so accounted; he has *sold himself to work wickedness*; his lusts

give law to him, he is at their beck, and is not his own master. He does the work of sin, supports its interest, and accepts its wages, Rom. vi. 16.

2. He shows them that, being in a state of bondage, their having a place in the house of God would not entitle them to the inheritance of sons; for (v. 35) *the servant*, though he be in the house for awhile, yet, being but a *servant*, *abideth not in the house for ever*. Services (we say) are no inheritances, they are but *temporary*, and not for a *perpetuity*; but the son of the family abideth ever. Now, (1.) This points primarily at the rejection of the Jewish church and nation. Israel had been *God's son*, his *first-born*; but they wretchedly degenerated into a *servile* disposition, were enslaved to the world and the flesh, and therefore, though by virtue of their birthright they thought themselves secure of their church-membership, Christ tells them that having thus made themselves servants they should not *abide in the house for ever*. Jerusalem, by opposing the gospel of Christ, which proclaimed liberty, and adhering to the Sinai-covenant, which gendered to bondage, after its term was *expired* came to be *in bondage with her children* (Gal. iv. 24, 25), and therefore was unchurched and disfranchised, her charter seized and taken away, and she was cast out as the son of the bond-woman, Gen. xxi. 14. Chrysostom gives this sense of this place: "Think not to be made free from sin by the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, for Moses was but a servant, and had not that perpetual authority in the church which the Son had; but, if the Son make you free, it is well," v. 36. But, (2.) It looks further, to the rejection of all that are the *servants of sin*, and receive not the *adoption of the sons of God*; though those unprofitable servants may be in God's house awhile, as retainers to his family, yet there is a day coming when the children of the *bond-woman* and of the *free* shall be distinguished. True believers only, who are the children of the promise and of the covenant, are accounted free, and shall abide for ever in the house, as Isaac: they shall have a *nail* in the holy place on earth (Ezra ix. 8) and *mansions* in the holy place in heaven, ch. xiv. 2.

3. He shows them the way of deliverance out of this state of bondage into the *glorious liberty of the children of God*, Rom. viii. 21. The case of those that are the servants of sin is sad, but thanks be to God it is not helpless, it is not hopeless. As it is the privilege of all the sons of the family, and their dignity above the servants, that they abide in the house for ever; so he who is *the Son*, the first-born among many brethren, and the heir of all things, has a power both of manumission and of adoption (v. 36): *If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed*. Note,

(1.) Jesus Christ in the gospel offers us *our freedom*; he has authority and power to

*make free*. [1.] To *discharge prisoners*; this he does in *justification*, by making satisfaction for *our guilt* (on which the gospel offer is grounded, which is to all a conditional *act of indemnity*, and to all true believers, upon their believing, an absolute *charter of pardon*), and for *our debts*, for which we were by the law arrested and in execution. Christ, as our surety, or rather our *bail* (for he was not originally bound *with us*, but upon our insolvency bound *for us*), compounds with the creditor, answers the demands of injured justice with more than an *equivalent*, takes the *bond and judgment* into his own hands, and gives them up *cancelled* to all that by faith and repentance give him (if I may so say) a *counter-security* to save his honour harmless, and so they are *made free*; and from the debt, and every part thereof, they are for ever acquitted, exonerated, and discharged, and a general release is sealed of all actions and claims; while against those who refuse to come up to these terms the securities lie still in the Redeemer's hands, in full force. [2.] He has a power to rescue *bond-slaves*, and this he does in *sanctification*; by the powerful arguments of his gospel, and the powerful operations of his Spirit, he breaks the power of corruption in the soul, rallies the scattered forces of reason and virtue, and fortifies God's interest against sin and Satan, and so the soul is made free. [3.] He has a power to *naturalize strangers and foreigners*, and this he does in *adoption*. This is a further act of grace; we are not only forgiven and healed, but *preferred*; there is a charter of privileges as well as pardon; and thus the Son makes us free *denizens* of the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the new Jerusalem.

(2.) Those whom Christ makes free are *free indeed*. It is not ἀληθῶς, the word used (v. 31) for disciples *indeed*, but ὄντως—*really*. It denotes, [1.] The truth and certainty of the promise, the liberty which the Jews boasted of was an *imaginary* liberty; they boasted of a *false gift*; but the liberty which Christ gives is a certain thing, it is real, and has real effects. The servants of sin promise themselves liberty, and fancy themselves free, when they have broken religion's bands asunder; but they cheat themselves. None are *free indeed* but those whom Christ *makes free*. [2.] It denotes the singular excellency of the freedom promised; it is a freedom that deserves the name, in comparison with which all other liberties are no better than slaveries, so much does it turn to the honour and advantage of those that are *made free* by it. It is a *glorious* liberty. It is that which is (so ὄντως signifies); it is *substance* (Prov. viii. 21); while the things of the world are shadows, things that *are not*.

4. He applies this to these unbelieving cavilling Jews, in answer to their boasts of relation to Abraham (v. 37): "I know very well that you are *Abraham's seed*, but now you seek to kill me, and therefore have forfeited



the honour of your relation to Abraham, *because my word hath no place in you.*" Observe here,

(1.) The dignity of their extraction admitted: "*I know that you are Abraham's seed, every one knows it, and it is your honour.*" He grants them what was true, and in what they said that was false (that they were *never* in bondage to any) he does not *contradict* them, for he studied to *profit* them, and not to *provoke* them, and therefore said that which would please them: *I know that you are Abraham's seed.* They boasted of their descent from Abraham, as that which *aggrandized* their names, and made them exceedingly honourable; whereas really it did but *aggravate* their crimes, and make them exceedingly sinful. Out of their own mouths will he judge vain-glorious hypocrites, who boast of their parentage and education: "Are you Abraham's seed? Why then did you not tread in the steps of his faith and obedience?"

(2.) The inconsistency of their practice with this dignity: *But you seek to kill me.* They had attempted it several times, and were now designing it, which quickly appeared (v. 59), when they *took up stones to cast at him.* Christ knows all the wickedness, not only which men do, but which they seek, and design, and endeavour to do. To seek to kill any innocent man is a crime black enough, but to *compass and imagine* the death of him that was King of kings was a crime the heinousness of which we want words to express.

(3.) The reason of this inconsistency. Why were they that were Abraham's seed so very inveterate against Abraham's promised seed, in whom they and *all the families of the earth* should be *blessed*? Our Saviour here tells them, It is because *my word hath no place in you, οὐ χωρεῖ ἐν υμῖν, Non capit in vobis*, so the Vulgate. "*My word does not take with you, you have no inclination to it, no relish of it, other things are more taking, more pleasing.*" Or, "*It does not take hold of you, it has no power over you, makes no impression upon you.*" Some of the critics read it, *My word does not penetrate into you; it descended as the rain, but it came upon them as the rain upon the rock, which it runs off, and did not soak into their hearts, as the rain upon the ploughed ground.* The Syriac reads it, "*Because you do not acquiesce in my word; you are not persuaded of the truth of it, nor pleased with the goodness of it.*" Our translation is very significant: *It has no place in you.* They sought to kill him, and so effectually to silence him, not because he had done them any harm, but because they could not bear the convincing, commanding power of his word. Note, [1.] The words of Christ ought to have a place in us, the innermost and uppermost place,—a *dwelling* place, as a man at home, and not as a stranger or sojourner,—a *working* place; it must have room to operate, to work sin out of us, and to work grace in us; it must have a *ruling*

place, its place must be *upon the throne*, it must dwell in us richly. [2.] There are many that make a profession of religion in whom *the word of Christ* has no place; they will not *allow* it a place, for they do not like it; Satan does all he can to *displace* it; and other things possess the place it should have in us. [3.] Where the word of God has no place no good is to be expected, for room is left there for all wickedness. If the unclean spirit find the heart empty of Christ's word, he *enters in, and dwells there.*

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication: we have one Father, *even* God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.

Here Christ and the Jews are still at issue; he sets himself to convince and convert them, while they still set themselves to contradict and oppose him.

I. He here traces the difference between his sentiments and theirs to a different rise and origin (v. 38): *I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.* Here are two fathers spoken of, according to the two families into which the sons of men are divided

—God and the devil, and without controversy these are contrary the one to the other.

1. Christ's doctrine was from heaven; it was copied out of the counsels of infinite wisdom, and the kind intentions of eternal love. (1.) *I speak that which I have seen.* The discoveries Christ has made to us of God and another world are not grounded upon guess and hearsay, but upon ocular inspection; so that he was thoroughly apprized of the nature, and assured of the truth, of all he said. He that is given to be a witness to the people is an eye-witness, and therefore unexceptionable. (2.) It is what I have seen with my Father. The doctrine of Christ is not a plausible hypothesis, supported by probable arguments, but it is an exact counterpart of the incontestable truths lodged in the eternal mind. It was not only what he had heard from his Father, but what he had seen with him when the counsel of peace was between them both. Moses spoke what he heard from God, but he might not see the face of God; Paul had been in the third heaven, but what he had seen there he could not, he must not, utter; for it was Christ's prerogative to have seen what he spoke, and to speak what he had seen.

2. Their doings were from hell: "You do that which you have seen with your father. You do, by your own works, father yourselves, for it is evident whom you resemble, and therefore easy to find out your origin." As a child that is trained up with his father learns his father's words and fashions, and grows like him by an affected imitation as well as by a natural image, so these Jews, by their malicious opposition to Christ and the gospel, made themselves as like the devil as if they had industriously set him before them for their pattern.

II. He takes off and answers their vain-glorious boasts of relation to Abraham and to God as their fathers, and shows the vanity and falsehood of their pretensions.

1. They pleaded relation to Abraham, and he replies to this plea. *They said, Abraham is our father, v. 39.* In this they intended, (1.) To do honour to themselves, and to make themselves look great. They had forgotten the mortification given them by that acknowledgment prescribed them (Deut. xxvi. 5), *A Syrian ready to perish was my father;* and the charge exhibited against their degenerate ancestors (whose steps they trod in, and not those of the first founder of the family), *Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite, Ezek. xvi. 3.* As it is common for those families that are sinking and going to decay to boast most of their pedigree, so it is common for those churches that are corrupt and depraved to value themselves upon their antiquity and the eminence of their first planters. *Fuimus Troes, fuit Ilium—We have been Trojans, and there once was Troy.* (2.) They designed to cast an odium upon Christ as if he reflected upon

the patriarch Abraham, in speaking of their father as one they had learned evil from. See how they sought an occasion to quarrel with him. Now Christ overthrows this plea, and exposes the vanity of it by a plain and cogent argument: "Abraham's children will do the works of Abraham, but you do not do Abraham's works, therefore you are not Abraham's children."

[1.] The proposition is plain: *If you were Abraham's children*, such children of Abraham as could claim an interest in the covenant made with him and his seed, which would indeed put an honour upon you, then you would do the works of Abraham, for to those only of Abraham's house who kept the way of the Lord, as Abraham did, would God perform what he had spoken," Gen. xviii. 19. Those only are reckoned the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise belongs, who tread in the steps of his faith and obedience, Rom. iv. 12. Though the Jews had their genealogies, and kept them exact, yet they could not by them make out their relation to Abraham, so as to take the benefit of the old entail (*per formam doni—according to the form of the gift*), unless they walked in the same spirit; good women's relation to Sarah is proved only by this—*whose daughters you are as long as you do well*, and no longer, 1 Pet. iii. 6. Note, Those who would approve themselves Abraham's seed must not only be of Abraham's faith, but do Abraham's works (James ii. 21, 22),—must come at God's call, as he did,—must follow God wherever he leads them,—must resign their dearest comforts to him,—must be strangers and sojourners in this world,—must keep up the worship of God in their families, and always walk before God in their uprightness; for these were the works of Abraham.

[2.] The assumption is evident likewise: *But you do not do the works of Abraham, for you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham, v. 40.*

First, He shows them what their work was, their present work, which they were now about; they sought to kill him; and three things are intimated as an aggravation of their intention:—1. They were so *unnatural* as to seek the life of a man, a man like themselves, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, who had done them no harm, nor given them any provocation. You imagine mischief against a man, Ps. lxxii. 3. 2. They were so *ungrateful* as to seek the life of one who had told them the truth, had not only done them no injury, but had done them the greatest kindness that could be; had not only not imposed upon them with a lie, but had instructed them in the most necessary and important truths; *was he therefore become their enemy?* 3. They were so *ungodly* as to seek the life of one who told them the truth which he had heard from God, who was a messenger sent from God to them, so that



their attempt against him was *quasi deicidium*—an act of malice against God. This was their work, and they persisted in it.

Secondly, He shows them that this did not become the children of Abraham; for *this did not Abraham*. 1. "He did nothing like this." He was famous for his humanity, witness his rescue of the captives; and for his piety, witness his obedience to the heavenly vision in many instances, and some tender ones. Abraham believed God; they were obstinate in unbelief: Abraham followed God; they fought against him; so that he would be ignorant of them, and would not acknowledge them, they were so unlike him, Isa. lxiii. 16. See Jer. xxii. 15—17. 2. "He would not have done thus if he had lived now, or I had lived then." *Hoc Abraham non fecisset—He would not have done this*; so some read it. We should thus reason ourselves out of any way of wickedness; would Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob have done so? We cannot expect to be ever with them, if we be never like them.

[3.] The conclusion follows of course (v. 41): "Whatever your boasts and pretensions be, you are not Abraham's children, but father yourselves upon another family (v. 41); there is a father whose deeds you do, whose spirit you are of, and whom you resemble." He does not yet say plainly that he means the devil, till they by their continued cavils forced him so to explain himself, which teaches us to treat even bad men with civility and respect, and not to be forward to say that of them, or to them, which, though true, sounds harsh. He tried whether they would suffer their own consciences to infer from what he said that they were the devil's children; and it is better to hear it from them now that we are called to repent, that is, to change our father and change our family, by changing our spirit and way, than to hear it from Christ in the great day.

2. So far were they from owning their unworthiness of relation to Abraham that they pleaded relation to God himself as their Father: "We are not born of fornication, we are not bastards, but legitimate sons; we have one Father, even God."

(1.) Some understand this literally. They were not the sons of the bondwoman, as the Ishmaelites were; nor begotten in incest, as the Moabites and Ammonites were (Deut. xxiii. 3); nor were they a spurious brood in Abraham's family, but Hebrews of the Hebrews; and, being born in lawful wedlock, they might call God Father, who instituted that honourable estate in innocence; for a legitimate seed, not tainted with divorces nor the plurality of wives, is called a *seed of God*, Mal. ii. 15.

(2.) Others take it figuratively. They begin to be aware now that Christ spoke of a spiritual not a carnal father, of the father of their religion; and so,

[1.] They deny themselves to be a gene

ration of idolaters: "We are not born of fornication, are not the children of idolatrous parents, nor have been bred up in idolatrous worships." Idolatry is often spoken of as spiritual whoredom, and idolaters as children of whoredoms, Hosea ii. 4; Isa. lvii. 3. Now, if they meant that they were not the posterity of idolaters, the allegation was false, for no nation was more addicted to idolatry than the Jews before the captivity; if they meant no more than that they themselves were not idolaters, what then? A man may be free from idolatry, and yet perish in another iniquity, and be shut out of Abraham's covenant. If thou commit no idolatry (apply it to this spiritual fornication), yet if thou kill thou art become a transgressor of the covenant. A rebellious prodigal son will be disinherited, though he be not born of fornication.

[2.] They boast themselves to be true worshippers of the true God. We have not many fathers, as the heathens had, *gods many and lords many*, and yet were without God, as *filius populi—a son of the people*, has many fathers and yet none certain; no, *the Lord our God is one Lord and one Father*, and therefore it is well with us. Note, Those flatter themselves, and put a damning cheat upon their own souls, who imagine that their professing the true religion and worshipping the true God will save them, though they worship not God in spirit and in truth, nor are true to their profession. Now our Saviour gives a full answer to this fallacious plea (v. 42, 43), and proves, by two arguments, that they had no right to call God Father.

First, They did not love Christ: *If God were your Father, you would love me*. He had disproved their relation to Abraham by their going about to kill him (v. 40), but here he disproves their relation to God by their not loving and owning him. A man may pass for a child of Abraham if he do not appear an enemy to Christ by gross sin; but he cannot approve himself a child of God unless he be a faithful friend and follower of Christ. Note, All that have God for their Father have a true love to Jesus Christ, an esteem of his person, a grateful sense of his love, a sincere affection to his cause and kingdom, a complacency in the salvation wrought out by him and in the method and terms of it, and a care to keep his commandments, which is the surest evidence of our love to him. We are here in a state of probation, upon our trial how we will conduct ourselves towards our Maker, and accordingly it will be with us in the state of retribution. God has taken various methods to prove us, and this was one: he sent his Son into the world, with sufficient proofs of his sonship and mission, concluding that all that called him Father would kiss his Son, and bid him welcome who was the first-born among many brethren; see 1 John v. 1. By this our adoption will be proved or disproved—Did we love Christ, or no? *If any man do not*, he is so far from being a child of

God that he is *anathema*, accursed, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Now our Saviour proves that if they were God's children they would *love him*; for, saith he, *I proceeded forth and came from God*. They will love him; for, 1. He was the *Son of God*: *I proceeded forth from God*. Ἐξηλθον this means his divine ἐξέλευσας, or origin from the Father, by the communication of the divine essence, and also the union of the divine λογὸς to his human nature; so Dr. Whitby. Now this could not but recommend him to the affections of all that were *born of God*. Christ is called the *beloved*, because, being the beloved of the Father, he is certainly the beloved of all the saints, Eph. i. 6. 2. He was *sent of God*, came from him as an ambassador to the world of mankind. He did not *come of himself*, as the false prophets, who had not either their *mission* or their *message* from God, Jer. xxiii. 21. Observe the emphasis he lays upon this: *I came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me*. He had both his credentials and his instructions from God; he came to *gather together in one the children of God* (ch. xi. 52), to bring *many sons to glory*, Heb. ii. 10. And would not all God's children embrace with both arms a messenger sent from their Father on *such errands*? But these Jews made it appear that they were nothing akin to God, by their want of affection to Jesus Christ.

*Secondly*, They did not understand him. It was a sign they did not belong to God's family that they did not understand the language and dialect of the family: *You do not understand my speech* (v. 43), *την λαλίαν την ἐμὴν*. Christ's speech was divine and heavenly, but intelligible enough to those that were acquainted with the voice of Christ in the Old Testament. Those that had made the word of the Creator familiar to them needed no other key to the dialect of the Redeemer; and yet these Jews make strange of the doctrine of Christ, and find knots in it, and I know not what stumbling stones. Could a Galilean be known by his speech? An Ephraimite by his *sibboleth*? And would any have the confidence to call God Father to whom the Son of God was a barbarian, even when he spoke the will of God in the words of the Spirit of God? Note, Those who are not acquainted with the divine speech have reason to fear that they are strangers to the divine nature. Christ spoke the words of God (ch. iii. 34) in the dialect of the kingdom of God; and yet they, who pretended to belong to the kingdom, understood not the idioms and properties of it, but like strangers, and rude ones too, ridiculed it. And the reason why they did not understand Christ's speech made the matter much worse: *Even because you cannot hear my word*, that is, "You cannot persuade yourselves to hear it attentively, impartially, and without prejudice, as it should be heard." The meaning of this *cannot* is an obstinate *will not*; as the Jews could not hear Stephen (Acts vii. 57)

nor Paul, Acts xxii. 22. Note, The rooted antipathy of men's corrupt hearts to the doctrine of Christ is the true reason of their ignorance of it, and of their errors and mistakes about it. They do not like it nor love it, and therefore they will not understand it; like Peter, who pretended he *knew not what the damsel said* (Matt. xxvi. 70), when in truth he knew not what to say to it. *You cannot hear my words*, for you have *stopped your ears* (Ps. lviii. 4, 5), and God, in a way of righteous judgment, *has made your ears heavy*, Isa. vi. 10.

III. Having thus disproved their relation both to Abraham and to God, he comes next to tell them plainly whose children they were: *You are of your father the devil*, v. 44. If they were not God's children, they were the devil's, for God and Satan divide the world of mankind; the devil is *therefore* said to *work in the children of disobedience*, Eph. ii. 2. All wicked people are the devil's children, *children of Belial* (2 Cor. vi. 15), the serpent's seed (Gen. iii. 15), children of the wicked one, Matt. xiii. 38. They partake of his nature, bear his image, obey his commands, and follow his example. Idolaters *said to a stock*, *Thou art our father*, Jer. ii. 27.

This is a high charge, and sounds very harsh and horrid, that any of the children of men, especially the church's children, should be called *children of the devil*, and therefore our Saviour fully proves it,

1. By a general argument: *The lusts of your father you will do*, Σίλετε ποιεῖν. (1.) "You do the devil's lusts, the lusts which he would have you to fulfil; you gratify and please him, and comply with his temptations, and are *led captive by him at his will*: nay, you do those lusts which the devil himself fulfils. Fleshly lusts and worldly lusts the devil tempts men to; but, being a spirit, he cannot fulfil them himself. The peculiar lusts of the devil are *spiritual wickedness*; the lusts of the intellectual powers, and their corrupt reasonings; pride and envy, and wrath and malice; enmity to that which is good, and enticing others to that which is evil; these are lusts which the devil fulfils, and those who are under the dominion of these lusts resemble the devil, as the child does the parent. The more there is of contemplation, and contrivance, and secret complacency, in sin, the more it resembles the *lusts of the devil*. (2.) *You will do the devil's lusts*. The more there is of the *will* in these lusts, the more there is of the devil in them. When sin is committed of *choice* and not by surprise, with *pleasure* and not with reluctance, when it is persisted in with a daring presumption and a desperate resolution, like theirs that said, *We have loved strangers and after them we will go*, then the sinner *will do the devil's lusts*. "The lusts of your father you *delight to do*," so Dr. Hammond; they are rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel.

2. By two particular instances, wherein



they manifestly resembled the devil—*murder and lying*. The devil is an enemy to life, because God is the God of life and life is the happiness of man; and an enemy to truth, because God is the God of truth and truth is the bond of human society.

(1.) He was a *murderer from the beginning*, not from his own beginning, for he was created an angel of light, and had a first estate which was pure and good, but from the beginning of his apostasy, which was soon after the creation of man. He was *ἀνθρωποκτόνος*—*homicida, a man-slayer*. [1.] He was a *hater of man*, and so in affection and disposition a murderer of him. He has his name, *Satan*, from *sitnah*—*hatred*. He maligned God's image upon man, envied his happiness, and earnestly desired his ruin, was an avowed enemy to the whole race.

[2.] He was man's tempter to *that sin which brought death into the world*, and so he was effectually the murderer of all mankind, which in Adam had but *one neck*. He was a murderer of souls, *deceived* them into sin, and by it *slew them* (Rom. vii. 11), poisoned man with the forbidden fruit, and, to aggravate the matter, made him his own murderer. Thus he was not only *at the beginning*, but *from the beginning*, which intimates that thus he *has been* ever since; as he began, so he continues, the murderer of men by his temptations. The great tempter is the great destroyer. The Jews called the devil *the angel of death*. [3.] He was the first wheel in the first murder that ever was committed by Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, 1 John iii. 12. If the devil had not been very strong in Cain, he could not have done such an unnatural thing as to kill his own brother. Cain killing his brother by the instigation of the devil, the devil is called the *murderer*, which does not speak Cain's personal guilt the less, but the devil's the more, whose torments, we have reason to think, will be the greater, when the time comes, for all that wickedness into which he has drawn men. See what reason we have to *stand upon our guard against the wiles of the devil*, and never to hearken to him (for he is a murderer, and certainly aims to do us mischief, even when he *speaks fair*), and to wonder that he who is the murderer of the children of men should yet be, by their own consent, so much their master. Now herein these Jews were followers of him, and were murderers, like him; murderers of souls, which they led blindfold into the ditch, and made the *children of hell*; sworn enemies of Christ, and now ready to be his betrayers and murderers, for the same reason that Cain killed Abel. These Jews were that *seed of the serpent* that were to *bruise the heel of the seed of the woman*: *Now you seek to kill me*.

(2.) He was a *liar*. A lie is opposed to truth (1 John ii. 21), and accordingly the devil is here described to be,

[1.] An enemy to truth, and therefore to Christ. *First*, He is a *deserter* from the truth; he *abode not in the truth*, did not continue in the purity and rectitude of his nature whereir he was created, but left his first state; when he degenerated from goodness, he departed from truth, for his apostasy was founded in a lie. The angels were the *hosts of the Lord*; those that fell were not *true* to their commander and sovereign, they were not to be *trusted*, being charged with folly and defection, Job iv. 18. By *the truth* here we may understand the revealed will of God concerning the salvation of man by Jesus Christ, the truth which Christ was now preaching, and which the Jews opposed; herein they did *like their father the devil*, who, *seeing* the honour put upon the human nature in the *first Adam*, and *foreseeing* the much greater honour intended in the *second Adam*, would not be reconciled to that counsel of God, nor *stand in the truth* concerning it, but, from a spirit of pride and envy, set himself to resist it, and to thwart the designs of it; and so did these Jews here, as his children and agents. *Secondly*, He is *destitute of the truth*: *There is no truth in him*. His interest in the world is supported by lies and falsehoods, and there is no truth, nothing you can confide in, in him, nor in any thing he says or does. The notions he propagates concerning good and evil are false and erroneous, his proofs are lying wonders, his temptations are all cheats; he has great knowledge of the truth, but having no affection to it, but on the contrary being a sworn enemy to it, he is said to have *no truth in him*.

[2.] He is a friend and patron of lying. *When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own*. Three things are here said of the devil with reference to the sin of lying:—*First*, That he is a *liar*; his oracles were lying oracles, his prophets lying prophets, and the images in which he was worshipped *teachers of lies*. He tempted our first parents with a downright lie. All his temptations are carried on by lies, calling *evil good and good evil*, and promising impunity in sin; he knows them to be lies, and suggests them with an intention to deceive, and so to destroy. When he now *contradicted* the gospel, in the scribes and Pharisees, it was by lies; and when afterwards he *corrupted it*, in the *man of sin*, it was by strong delusions, and a great complicated lie. *Secondly*, That when he *speaks a lie he speaks of his own*, ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων. It is the proper *idiom* of his language; of his own, not of God; his Creator never put it into him. When men speak a lie they borrow it from the devil, *Satan fills their hearts to lie* (Acts v. 3); but when the devil speaks a lie the *model* of it is of his own framing, the motives to it are from himself, which bespeaks the desperate depth of wickedness into which those apostate spirits are sunk; as in their first defection they had no tempter, so their

sinfulness is still their own. *Thirdly*, That he is the *father of it*, ἀποῦ. 1. He is the father of every *lie*; not only of the lies which he himself suggests, but of those which others speak; he is the author and founder of all lies. When men speak lies, they speak from him, and as his mouth; they come originally from him, and bear his image. 2. He is the father of every *liar*; so it may be understood. God made men with a disposition to truth. It is congruous to reason and natural light, to the order of our faculties and the laws of society, that we should speak truth; but the devil, the author of sin, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, has so corrupted the nature of man that the wicked are said to be *estranged from the womb, speaking lies* (Ps. lviii. 3); he has taught them *with their tongues to use deceit*, Rom. iii. 13. He is the father of liars, who begat them, who trained them up in the *way of lying*, whom they resemble and obey, and with whom all liars shall have their portion for ever.

IV. Christ, having thus proved all murderers and all liars to be the devil's children, leaves it to the consciences of his hearers to say, *Thou art the man*. But he comes in the following verses to assist them in the application of it to themselves; he does not call them *liars*, but shows them that they were *no friends to truth*, and therein resembled him who *abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him*. Two things he charges upon them:—

1. That they would not *believe the word of truth* (v. 45), ὅτι τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω, οὐ πιστεύετε μοι.

(1.) Two ways it may be taken;—[1.] "Though I tell you the truth, yet you will not believe me (ὅτι), that I do so." Though he gave abundant proof of his commission from God, and his affection to the children of men, yet they would not believe that he told them the truth. Now was *truth fallen in the street*, Isa. lix. 14, 15. The greatest truths with some gained not the least credit; for they *rebelled against the light*, Job xxiv. 13. Or, [2.] *Because I tell you the truth* (so we read it) therefore *you believe me not*. They would not receive him, nor entertain him as a prophet, because he told them some unpleasant truths which they did not care to hear, told them the truth concerning themselves and their own case, showed them their faces in a glass that would not flatter them; therefore they would not believe a word he said. Miserable is the case of those to whom the light of divine truth is become a torment.

(2.) Now, to show them the unreasonableness of their infidelity, he condescends to put the matter to this fair issue, v. 46. He and they being contrary, either he was in an error or they were. Now take it either way.

[1.] If he were in an error, why did they not convince him? The falsehood of *pretended* prophets was discovered either by the *ill tendency* of their doctrines (Deut. xiii. 2), or

by the *ill tenour* of their conversation: *You shall know them by their fruits*; but (saith Christ) *which of you*, you of the sanhedrim, that take upon you to judge of prophets, *which of you convinceth me of sin*? They accused him of some of the worst of crimes—gluttony, drunkenness, blasphemy, sabbath-breaking, confederacy with Satan, and what not. But their accusations were malicious groundless calumnies, and such as every one that knew him knew to be *utterly false*. When they had done their utmost by trick and artifice, subornation and perjury, to prove some crime upon him, the very judge that condemned him owned he *found no fault in him*. The *sin* he here challenges them to convict him of is, *First*, An inconsistent doctrine. They had heard his testimony; could they show any thing in it absurd or unworthy to be believed, any contradiction either of himself or of the scriptures, or any corruption of truth or manners insinuated by his doctrine? ch. xviii. 20. Or, *Secondly*, An incongruous conversation: "Which of you can justly charge me with any thing, in word or deed, unbecoming a prophet?" See the wonderful condescension of our Lord Jesus, that he demanded not credit any further than the allowed motives of credibility supported his demands. See Jer. ii. 5, 31; Mic. vi. 3. Ministers may hence learn, 1. To *walk so circumspectly* as that it may not be in the power of their most strict observers to convince them of sin, *that the ministry be not blamed*. The only way not to be convicted of sin is not to sin. 2. To be willing to *admit a scrutiny*; though we are confident in many things that we are in the right, yet we should be willing to have it tried whether we be not in the wrong. See Job vi. 24.

[2.] If they were in an error, why were they not convinced by him? "If I say the truth, why do you not believe me? If you cannot convince me of error, you must own that I say the truth, and why do you not then give me credit? Why will you not deal with me upon trust?" Note, If men would but enquire into the reason of their infidelity, and examine why they do not believe that which they cannot gainsay, they would find themselves reduced to such absurdities as they could not but be ashamed of; for it will be found that the reason why we believe not in Jesus Christ is because we are not willing to part with our sins, and deny ourselves, and serve God faithfully; that we are not of the Christian religion, because we would not indeed be of any, and unbelief of our Redeemer resolves itself into a downright rebellion against our Creator.

2. Another thing charged upon them is that they would not hear the words of God (v. 47), which further shows how groundless their claim of relation to God was. Here is,

(1.) A doctrine laid down: *He that is of God heareth God's words*; that is, [1.] He is *willing and ready* to hear them, is sin-



cerely desirous to know what the mind of God is, and cheerfully embraces whatever he knows to be so. God's words have such an authority over, and such an agreeableness with all that are born of God, that they meet them, as the child Samuel did, with, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*. Let the word of the Lord come. [2.] He *apprehends* and *discerns* them, he so hears them as to perceive the *voice of God* in them, which the natural man does not, 1 Cor. ii. 14. He that is of God is soon aware of the discoveries he makes of himself of the *nearness of his name* (Ps. lxxv. 1), as they of the family know the master's tread, and the master's knock, and *open to him immediately* (Luke xii. 36), as the sheep know the voice of their shepherd from that of a stranger, *ch. x. 4, 5*; Cant. ii. 8.

(2.) The application of this doctrine, for the conviction of these unbelieving Jews: *You therefore hear them not*; that is, "You heed not, you understand not, you believe not, the words of God, nor care to hear them, because you are not of God. Your being thus deaf and dead to the words of God is a plain evidence that you are not of God." It is in his word that God manifests himself and is present among us; we are therefore reckoned to be well or ill affected to God according as we are well or ill affected to his word; see 2 Cor. iv. 4; 1 John iv. 6. Or, their not being of God was the reason why they did not profitably *hear the words of God*, which Christ spoke; they did not understand and believe him, not because the things themselves were obscure or wanted evidence, but because the hearers were *not of God*, were not born again. If the word of the kingdom do not bring forth fruit, the blame is to be laid upon the soil, not upon the seed, as appears by the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii. 3.

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? 49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. 50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

Here is, I. The malice of hell breaking out in the base language which the unbelieving Jews gave to our Lord Jesus. Hitherto they had cavilled at his doctrine, and had made invidious remarks upon it; but, having shown themselves uneasy when he complained (v. 43, 47) that they would not hear him, now at length they fall to downright railing, v. 48. They were not the common people, but, as it should seem, the scribes and Pharisees, the men of consequence, who, when they saw themselves convicted of an obstinate infidelity, scornfully turned off the conviction with this: *Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?*

See here, see it and wonder, see it and tremble,

1. What was the blasphemous character commonly given of our Lord Jesus among the wicked Jews, to which they refer. (1.) That he was a Samaritan, that is, that he was an enemy to their church and nation, one that they hated and could not endure. Thus they exposed him to the ill will of the people, with whom you could not put a man into a worse name than to call him a *Samaritan*. If he had been a Samaritan, he had been punishable, by the *beating of the rebels* (as they called it), for coming into the temple. They had often enough called him a *Galilean*—a *meanman*; but as if that were not enough, though it contradicted the other, they will have him a *Samaritan*—a *bad man*. The Jews to this day call the Christians, in reproach, *Cuthæi*—*Samaritans*. Note, Great endeavours have in all ages been used to make good people odious by putting them under black characters, and it is easy to run that down with a crowd and a cry which is once put into an ill name. Perhaps because Christ justly inveighed against the pride and tyranny of the priests and elders, they hereby suggest that he aimed at the ruin of their church, in aiming at its reformation, and was *falling away* to the Samaritans. (2.) That he *had a devil*. Either, [1.] That he was *in league with the devil*. Having reproached his doctrine as tending to Samaritanism, here they reflect upon his miracles as done in combination with Beelzebub. Or rather, [2.] That he was possessed with a devil, that he was a melancholy man, whose brain was *clouded*, or a mad man, whose brain was *heated*, and that which he said was no more to be believed than the extravagant rambles of a distracted man, or one in a delirium. Thus the divine revelation of those things which are above the discovery of reason have been often branded with the charge of enthusiasm, and the prophet was called a *mad fellow*, 2 Kings ix. 11; Hosea ix. 7. The inspiration of the Pagan oracles and prophets was indeed a frenzy, and those that had it were for the time beside themselves; but that which was truly *divine* was not so. *Wisdom is justified of her children*, as wisdom indeed.

2. How they undertook to justify this character, and applied it to the present occasion: *Say we not well that thou art so?* One would think that his excellent discourses should have altered their opinion of him, and have made them recant; but, instead of this, their hearts were more hardened and their prejudices confirmed. They value themselves on their enmity to Christ, as if they had never spoken *better* than when they spoke the worst they could of Jesus Christ. Those have arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness who avow their impiety, repeat what they should retract, and justify themselves in that for which they ought to condemn them-

selves. It is bad to say and do ill, but it is worse to *stand to it*; I do *well to be angry*. When Christ spoke with so much boldness against the sins of the great men, and thereby incensed them against him, those who were sensible of no interest but what is secular and sensual concluded him *beside himself*, for they thought none but a madman would lose his preferment, and hazard his life, for his religion and conscience.

II. The meekness and mercifulness of Heaven shining in Christ's reply to this vile calumny, v. 49, 50.

1. He denies their charge against him. *I have not a devil*; as Paul (Acts xxvi. 25), *I am not mad*. The imputation is unjust; "I am neither actuated by a devil, nor in compact with one;" and this he evidenced by what he did against the devil's kingdom. He takes no notice of their calling him a *Samaritan*, because it was a calumny that disproved itself, it was a personal reflection, and not worth taking notice of: but saying he had a devil reflected on his commission, and therefore he answered that. St. Augustine gives this gloss upon his not saying any thing to their calling him a Samaritan—that he was indeed that good Samaritan spoken of in the parable, Luke x. 33.

2. He asserts the sincerity of his own intentions: But *I honour my Father*. They suggested that he took undue honours to himself, and derogated from the honour due to God only, both which he *denies* here, in saying that he made it his business to honour his Father, and him only. It also proves that he *had not a devil*; for, if he had, he would not honour God. Note, Those who can truly say that they make it their constant care to honour God are sufficiently armed against the censures and reproaches of men.

3. He complains of the wrong they did him by their calumnies: *You do dishonour me*. By this it appears that, as man, he had a tender sense of the disgrace and indignity done him; reproach was a sword in his bones, and yet he underwent it for our salvation. It is the will of God that *all men should honour the Son*, yet there are many that *dishonour him*; such a contradiction is there in the carnal mind to the will of God. Christ honoured his Father so as never man did, and yet was himself dishonoured so as never man was; for, though God has promised that those who honour him he will honour, he never promised that men should honour them.

4. He clears himself from the imputation of vain glory, in saying this concerning himself, v. 50. See here, (1.) His *contempt of worldly honour* *I seek not mine own glory*. He did not aim at this in what he had said of himself or against his persecutors; he did not court the applause of men, nor covet preferment in the world, but industriously declined both. He did not *seek his own glory* distinct from his Father's, nor had any separate interest of his own. For men to *search*

*their own glory* is *not glory* indeed (Prov. xxv. 27), but rather their shame to be so much out in their aim. This comes in here as a reason why Christ made so light of their reproaches. "You do dishonour me, but cannot disturb me, shall not disquiet me, for I *seek not my own glory*." Note, Those who are dead to men's praise can safely bear their contempt. (2.) His *comfort* under worldly dishonour: *There is one that seeketh and judgeth*. In two things Christ made it appear that he *sought not his own glory*; and here he tells us what satisfied him as to both.

[1.] He did not *court* men's respect, but was indifferent to it, and in reference to this he saith, "*There is one that seeketh*, that will secure and advance, my interest in the esteem and affections of the people, while I am in no care about it. Note, God will seek *their* honour that do not seek *their own*; for before honour is humility. [2.] He did not *revenge* men's affronts, but was unconcerned at them, and in reference to this he saith, "*There is one that judgeth*, that will vindicate my honour, and severely reckon with those that trample upon it." Probably he refers here to the judgments that were coming upon the nation of the Jews for the indignities they did to the Lord Jesus. See Ps. xxxvii. 13—15. *I heard not, for thou wilt hear*. If we undertake to judge for ourselves, whatever damage we sustain, our recompence is in our own hands; but if we be, as we ought to be, humble appellants and patient expectants, we shall find, to our comfort, *there is one that judgeth*.

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you. If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. 52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. 53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? 54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: 55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. 57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? 58 Jesus said unto them,



Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. 59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

In these verses we have,

I. The doctrine of the immortality of believers laid down, v. 51. It is ushered in with the usual solemn preface, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*, which commands both attention and assent, and this is what he says, *If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death*. Here we have, 1. The character of a believer: he is one that *keeps the sayings of the Lord Jesus, τον λόγον τον ἐμὸν—my word*; that word of mine which I have delivered to you; this we must not only receive, but keep; not only have, but hold. We must keep it in mind and memory, keep it in love and affection, so keep it as in nothing to violate it or go contrary to it, keep it *without spot* (1 Tim. vi. 14), keep it as a trust committed to us, keep in it as our way, keep to it as our rule. 2. The privilege of a believer: *He shall by no means see death for ever*; so it is in the original. Not as if the bodies of believers were secured from the stroke of death. No, even the *children of the Most High must die like men*, and the followers of Christ have been, more than other men, in deaths often, and *killed all the day long*; how then is this promise made good that they shall not see death? Answer, (1.) The property of death is so altered to them that they do not see it as death, they do not see the terror of death, it is quite taken off; their sight does not *terminate* in death, as theirs does who *live by sense*; no, they look so clearly, so comfortably, through death, and beyond death, and are so taken up with their state on the other side death, that they overlook death, and *see it not*. (2.) The power of death is so broken that though there is no remedy, but they must *see death*, yet they shall not see death *for ever*, shall not be always shut up under its arrests, the day will come when *death shall be swallowed up in victory*. (3.) They are perfectly delivered from *eternal death*, shall not be hurt of the *second death*. That is the death especially meant here, that death which is *for ever*, which is opposed to everlasting life; this they shall never see, for they shall *never come into condemnation*; they shall have their everlasting lot where there will be *no more death*, where they *cannot die any more*, Luke xx. 36. Though now they cannot avoid seeing death, and tasting it too, yet they shall shortly be there where it will be *seen no more for ever*, Exod. xiv. 13.

II. The Jews cavil at this doctrine. Instead of laying hold of this precious promise of immortality, which the nature of man has an ambition of (who is there that does not love

life, and dread the sight of death?) they lay hold of this occasion to reproach him that makes them so kind an offer: *Now we know that thou hast a devil*. Abraham is dead. Observe here,

1. Their railing: "*Now we know that thou hast a devil*, that thou art a madman; thou ravest, and sayest thou knowest not what." See how these swine trample underfoot the precious pearls of gospel promises. If now at last they had evidence to prove him mad, why did they say (v. 48), before they had that proof, *Thou hast a devil*? But this is the method of malice, first to *fasten* an invidious charge, and then to *fish* for evidence of it: *Now we know that thou hast a devil*. If he had not abundantly proved himself a teacher come from God, his promises of immortality to his credulous followers might justly have been ridiculed, and charity itself would have imputed them to a crazed fancy; but his doctrine was evidently divine, his miracles confirmed it, and the Jews' religion taught them to expect such a prophet, and to believe in him; for them therefore thus to reject him was to abandon that promise to which their *twelve tribes hoped to come*, Acts xxvi. 7.

2. Their reasoning, and the colour they had to *run him down* thus. In short, they look upon him as guilty of an insufferable piece of arrogance, in making himself greater than Abraham and the prophets: *Abraham is dead*, and the prophets, they are dead too; very true, by the same token that these Jews were the genuine offspring of those that killed them. Now, (1.) It is true that Abraham and the prophets were great men, great in the favour of God, and great in the esteem of all good men. (2.) It is true that they kept God's sayings, and were obedient to them; and yet, (3.) It is true that they died; they never pretended to *have*, much less to *give*, immortality, but every one in his own order was *gathered to his people*. It was their honour that they died in *faith*, but die they must. Why should a good man be afraid to die, when Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead? They have *tracked* the way through that darksome valley, which should reconcile us to death and help to take off the terror of it. Now they think Christ talks madly, when he saith, *If a man keep my sayings, he shall never taste death*. Tasting death means the same thing with *seeing it*; and well may death be represented as grievous to several of the senses, which is the destruction of them all. Now their arguing goes upon two mistakes:—[1.] They understood Christ of an immortality in this world, and this was a mistake. In the sense that Christ spoke, it was not true that *Abraham and the prophets were dead*, for God is still the God of Abraham and the God of the holy prophets (Rev. xxii. 6); now God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; therefore Abraham and the prophets are still alive, and, a.

Christ meant it, they had not *seen* nor *tasted* death. [2.] They thought none could be greater than Abraham and the prophets, whereas they could not but know that the Messiah would be greater than Abraham or any of the prophets; they did virtuously, but he excelled them all; nay, they borrowed their greatness from him. It was the honour of Abraham that he was the Father of the Messiah, and the honour of the prophets that they testified beforehand concerning him: so that he certainly *obtained* a far more *excellent name* than they. Therefore, instead of inferring from Christ's making himself greater than Abraham that he had a *devil*, they should have inferred from his proving himself so (by doing the works which neither Abraham nor the prophets ever did) that he was the Christ; but their eyes were blinded. They scornfully asked, *Whom makest thou thyself?* As if he had been guilty of pride and vain-glory; whereas he was so far from making himself greater than he was that he now drew a veil over his own glory, emptied himself, and made himself less than he was, and was the greatest example of humility that ever was.

III. Christ's reply to this cavil; still he vouchsafes to reason with them, that every mouth may be stopped. No doubt he could have struck them dumb or dead upon the spot, but this was the *day of his patience*.

1. In his answer he insists not upon his own testimony concerning himself, but waives it as not sufficient nor conclusive (v. 54): *If I honour myself, my honour is nothing*, *ἐὰν ἐγὼ δοξάζω—if I glorify myself*. Note, Self-honour is no honour; and the affectation of glory is both the forfeiture and the defeasance of it: it is *not glory* (Prov. xxv. 27), but so great a reproach that there is no sin which men are more industrious to hide than this; even he that most affects praise would not be thought to do it. Honour of our own creating is a mere chimera, has nothing in it, and therefore is called *vain-glory*. Self-admirers are self-deceivers. Our Lord Jesus was not one that *honoured himself*, as they represented him; he was *crowned* by him who is the fountain of honour, and glorified not himself to be made a high priest, Heb. v. 4, 5.

2. He refers himself to his Father, God; and to their father, Abraham.

(1.) To his Father, God: *It is my Father that honoureth me*. By this he means, [1.] That he *derived* from his Father all the honour he now claimed; he had commanded them to believe in him, to follow him, and to keep his word, all which put an honour upon him; but it was the Father that *laid help* upon him, that *lodged* all *fulness* in him, that sanctified him, and sealed him, and sent him into the world to receive all the honours due to the Messiah, and this justified him in all these demands of respect. [2.] That he *depended* upon his Father for all the honour he further *looked for*. He courted not the applauses of

the age, but despised them; for his eye and heart were upon the glory which the Father had promised him, and *which he had with the Father before the world was*. He aimed at an advancement with which the Father was to *exalt him*, a name he was to *give him*, Phil. ii. 8, 9. Note, Christ and all that are his depend upon God for their honour; and he that is sure of honour where he is known cares not though he be slighted where he is in disguise. Appealing thus often to his Father, and his Father's testimony of him, which yet the Jews did not admit nor give credit to,

*First*, He here takes occasion to show the reason of their incredulity, notwithstanding *this* testimony—and this was their *unacquaintedness* with God; as if he had said, "But why should I talk to you of my Father's honouring me, when he is one you know nothing of? You say of him that he is your God, yet you have not known him." Here observe,

a. The profession they made of relation to God: "You say that he is your God, the God you have chosen, and are in covenant with; you say that you are Israel; but all are not so indeed that are of Israel," Rom. ix. 6. Note, Many pretend to have an interest in God, and say that he is *theirs*, who yet have no just cause to say so. Those who called themselves the *temple of the Lord*, having *profaned the excellency of Jacob*, did but trust in lying words. What will it avail us to say, He is *our God*, if we be not in sincerity *his people*, nor such as he will own? Christ mentions here their profession of relation to God, as that which was an aggravation of their unbelief. All people will *honour* those whom their God honours; but these Jews, who said that the Lord was their God, studied how to put the utmost disgrace upon one upon whom their God put honour. Note, The profession we make of a covenant relation to God, and an interest in him, if it be not improved *by us* will be improved *against us*.

b. Their ignorance of him, and estrangement from him, notwithstanding this profession: *Yet you have not known him*. (a.) *You know him not at all*. These Pharisees were so taken up with the study of their traditions concerning things foreign and trifling that they never minded the most needful and useful knowledge; like the false prophets of old, who *caused people to forget God's name by their dreams*, Jer. xxiii. 27. Or, (b.) *You know him not aright*, but mistake concerning him; and this is as bad as not knowing him at all, or worse. Men may be able to dispute subtly concerning God, and yet may think him such a one as themselves, and *not know him*. You say that he is *yours*, and it is natural to us to desire to know *our own*, yet you *know him not*. Note, There are many who *claim kindred* to God who yet have no acquaintance with him. It is only the name of God which they have learned to talk of, and to hector with; but for the nature of God, his attributes and perfections, and relations



to his creatures, they know nothing of the matter; we *speak this to their shame*, 1 Cor. xv. 34. Multitudes satisfy themselves, but deceive themselves, with a titular relation to an *unknown God*. This Christ charges upon the Jews here, [a.] To show how vain and groundless their pretensions of relation to God were. "You say that he is yours, but you give yourselves the lie, for it is plain that you do not know him;" and we reckon that a cheat is effectually convicted if it be found that he is ignorant of the persons he pretends alliance to. [b.] To show the true reason why they were not wrought upon by Christ's doctrine and miracles. They knew not God; and therefore perceived not the image of God, nor the voice of God in Christ. Note, The reason why men receive not the *gospel of Christ* is because they have not the *knowledge of God*. Men *submit not to the righteousness of Christ* because they are *ignorant of God's righteousness*, Rom. x. 3. They that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ, are put together, 2 Thess. i. 8.

Secondly, He gives them the reason of his assurance that his Father would honour him and own him: *But I know him*; and again, *I know him*; which bespeaks, not only his acquaintance with him, having lain in his bosom, but his confidence in him, to stand by him, and bear him out in his whole undertaking; as was prophesied concerning him (Isa. l. 7, 8); *I know that I shall not be ashamed, for he is near that justifies*; and as Paul, "*I know whom I have believed*" (2 Tim. i. 12), *I know him to be faithful, and powerful and heartily engaged in the cause which I know to be his own*." Observe, 1. How he *professes* his knowledge of his Father, with the greatest certainty, as one that was neither afraid nor ashamed to own it: *If I should say I know him not, I should be a liar like unto you*. He would not deny his relation to God, to humour the Jews, and to avoid their reproaches, and prevent further trouble; nor would he retract what he had said, nor confess himself either deceived or a deceiver; if he should, he would be found a false witness against God and himself. Note, Those who disown their religion and relation to God, as Peter, are liars, as much as hypocrites are, who pretend to know him, when they do not. See 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14. Mr. Clark observes well, upon this, that it is a great sin to deny God's grace in us. 2. How he *proves* his knowledge of his Father: *I know him and keep his sayings, or his word*. Christ, as man, was obedient to the moral law, and, as Redeemer, to the mediatorial law; and in both he kept his Father's word, and his own word with the Father. Christ requires of us (v. 51) that we *keep his sayings*; and he has set before us a copy of obedience, a copy without a blot: he *kept his Father's sayings*; well might he who *learned obedience* teach it; see Heb. v. 8, 9. Christ by this evinced that he knew the Father. Note, The best proof of our acquaintance with God is our obedience

to him. Those only know God aright that keep his word; it is a ruled case, 1 John ii. 3. *Hereby we know that we know him* (and do not only fancy it), *if we keep his commandments*.

(2.) Christ refers them to *their father*, whom they boasted so much of a relation to, and that was Abraham, and this closes the discourse.

[1.] Christ asserts Abraham's prospect of him, and respect to him: *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad*, v. 56. And by this he proves that he was not at all out of the way when he *made himself greater than Abraham*. Two things he here speaks of as instances of that patriarch's respect to the promised Messiah:—

First, The ambition he had to *see his day*: *He rejoiced, ἡγαλλιάσθη—he leaped at it*. The word, though it commonly signifies *rejoicing*, must here signify a transport of desire rather than of joy, for otherwise the latter part of the verse would be a tautology; he *saw it, and was glad*. He *reached out, or stretched himself forth*, that he might *see my day*; as Zaccheus, that ran before, and climbed the tree, to *see Jesus*. The notices he had received of the Messiah to come had raised in him an expectation of something *great*, which he earnestly longed to know more of. The dark intimation of that which is considerable puts men upon enquiry, and makes them earnestly ask *Who?* and *What?* and *Where?* and *When?* and *How?* And thus the prophets of the Old Testament, having a general idea of a grace that should *come, searched diligently* (1 Pet. i. 10), and Abraham was as industrious herein as any of them. God told him of a land that he would give his posterity, and of the wealth and honour he designed them (Gen. xv. 14); but he never leaped thus to see that day, as he did to see the day of the Son of man. He could not look with so much indifferency upon the promised seed as he did upon the promised land; *in that he was, but to the other he could not be, contentedly a stranger*. Note, Those who rightly know any thing of Christ cannot but be earnestly desirous to know more of him. Those who discern the dawning of the light of the Sun of righteousness cannot but wish to see his rising. The mystery of redemption is that which *angels desire to look into*, much more should we, who are more immediately concerned in it. Abraham desired to see Christ's day, though it was at a great distance; but this degenerate seed of his discerned not his day, nor bade it welcome when it came. The appearing of Christ, which gracious souls love and long for, carnal hearts dread and loathe.

Secondly, The satisfaction he had in what he did see of it: *He saw it, and was glad*. Observe here,

a. How God gratified the pious desire of Abraham; he longed to see Christ's day, and he *saw it*. Though he saw it not so plainly, and fully, and distinctly as we now see it un-

der the gospel, yet he saw something of it, more afterwards than he did at first. Note, To him that has, and to him that asks, shall be given; to him that uses and improves what he has, and that desires and prays for more of the knowledge of Christ, God will give more. But how did Abraham see Christ's day? (a.) Some understand it of the sight he had of it in the other world. The separate soul of Abraham, when the veil of flesh was rent, saw the mysteries of the kingdom of God in heaven. Calvin mentions this sense of it, and does not much disallow it. Note, The longings of gracious souls after Jesus Christ will be fully satisfied when they come to heaven, and not till then. But, (b.) It is more commonly understood of some sight he had of Christ's day in this world. They that received not the promises, yet saw them afar off, Heb. xi. 13. Balaam saw Christ, but not now, not nigh. There is room to conjecture that Abraham had some vision of Christ and his day, for his own private satisfaction, which is not, nor must be, recorded in his story, like that of Daniel's, which must be shut up, and sealed unto the time of the end, Dan. xii. 4. Christ knew what Abraham saw better than Moses did. But there are divers things recorded in which Abraham saw more of that which he longed to see than he did when the promise was first made to him. He saw in Melchizedek one made like unto the Son of God, and a priest for ever; he saw an appearance of Jehovah, attended with two angels, in the plains of Mamre. In the prevalency of his intercession for Sodom he saw a specimen of Christ's intercession; in the casting out of Ishmael, and the establishment of the covenant with Isaac, he saw a figure of the gospel day, which is Christ's day; for these things were an allegory. In offering Isaac, and the ram instead of Isaac, he saw a double type of the great sacrifice; and his calling the place *Jehovah-jireh*—*It shall be seen*, intimates that he saw something more in it than others did, which time would produce; and in making his servant put his hand under his thigh, when he swore, he had a regard to the Messiah.

b. How Abraham entertained these discoveries of Christ's day, and bade them welcome: *He saw, and was glad*. He was glad of what he saw of God's favour to himself, and glad of what he foresaw of the mercy God had in store for the world. Perhaps this refers to Abraham's laughing when God assured him of a son by Sarah (Gen. xvii. 16, 17), for that was not a laughter of distrust as Sarah's, but of joy; in that promise he saw Christ's day, and it filled him with joy unspeakable. Thus he embraced the promises. Note, A believing sight of Christ and his day will put gladness into the heart. No joy like the joy of faith; we are never acquainted with true pleasure till we are acquainted with Christ.

[2.] The Jews cavil at this, and reproach

him for it (v. 57): *Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?* Here, First, They suppose that if Abraham saw him and his day he also had seen Abraham, which yet was not a necessary innuendo, but this turn of his words would best serve to expose him; yet it was true that Christ had seen Abraham, and had talked with him as a man talks with his friend. Secondly, They suppose it a very absurd thing for him to pretend to have seen Abraham, who was dead so many ages before he was born. The state of the dead is an invisible state; but here they ran upon the old mistake, understanding that corporally which Christ spoke spiritually. Now this gave them occasion to despise his youth, and to upbraid him with it, as if he were but of yesterday, and knew nothing. *Thou art not yet fifty years old*. They might as well have said, *Thou art not forty*; for he was now but thirty-two or thirty-three years old. As to this, Irenæus, one of the first fathers, with this passage supports the tradition which he says he had from some that had conversed with St. John, that our Saviour lived to be fifty years old, which he contends for, *Advers. Hæres. lib. ii. cap. 39, 40*. See what little credit is to be given to tradition; and, as to this here, the Jews spoke at random; some year they would mention, and therefore pitched upon one that they thought he was far enough short of; he did not look to be forty, but they were sure he could not be fifty, much less contemporary with Abraham. Old age is reckoned to begin at fifty (Num. iv. 47), so that they meant no more than this, "Thou art not to be reckoned an old man; many of us are much thy seniors, and yet pretend not to have seen Abraham." Some think that his countenance was so altered, with grief and watching, that, together with the gravity of his aspect, it made him look like a man of fifty years old: *his visage was so marred*, Isa. lii. 14.

[3.] Our Saviour gives an effectual answer to this cavil, by a solemn assertion of his own seniority even to Abraham himself (v. 58): "Verily, verily, I say unto you; I do not only say it in private to my own disciples, who will be sure to say as I say, but to you my enemies and persecutors; I say it to your faces, take it how you will: *Before Abraham was, I am*;" *πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι, ἐγὼ εἰμι*, *Before Abraham was made or born, I am*. The change of the word is observable, and bespeaks Abraham a creature, and himself the Creator; well therefore might he make himself greater than Abraham. *Before Abraham he was, First*, As God. *I am*, is the name of God (Exod. iii. 14); it denotes his self-existence; he does not say, *I was*, but *I am*, for he is the first and the last, immutably the same (Rev. i. 8); thus he was not only before Abraham, but before all worlds, ch. i. 1; Prov. viii. 23. Secondly, As Mediator. He was the appointed Messiah, long before Abraham; the Lamb slain from the foundation of



the world (Rev. xiii. 8), the channel of conveyance of light, life, and love from God to man. This supposes his divine nature, that he is the same in himself from eternity (Heb. xiii. 8), and that he is the same to man ever since the fall; he was made of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to Adam, and Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Shem, and all the patriarchs that lived and died by faith in him before Abraham was born. Abraham was the root of the Jewish nation, the rock out of which they were hewn. If Christ was before Abraham, his doctrine and religion were no novelty, but were, in the substance of them, prior to Judaism, and ought to take place of it.

[4.] This great word ended the dispute abruptly, and put a period to it: they could bear to hear no more from him, and he needed to say no more to them, having witnessed this good confession, which was sufficient to support all his claims. One would think that Christ's discourse, in which shone so much both of grace and glory, should have captivated them all; but their inveterate prejudice against the holy spiritual doctrine and law of Christ, which were so contrary to their pride and worldliness, baffled all the methods of conviction. Now was fulfilled that prophecy (Mal. iii. 1, 2), that when the messenger of the covenant should come to his temple they would not abide the day of his coming, because he would be like a refiner's fire. Observe here,

First, How they were enraged at Christ for what he said: *They took up stones to cast at him, v. 59.* Perhaps they looked upon him as a blasphemer, and such were indeed to be stoned (Lev. xxiv. 16); but they must be first legally tried and convicted. Farewell justice and order if every man pretend to execute a law at his pleasure. Besides, they had said but just now that he was a distracted crack-brained man, and if so it was against all reason and equity to punish him as a malefactor for what he said. *They took up stones.* Dr. Lightfoot will tell you how they came to have stones so ready in the temple; they had workmen at this time repairing the temple, or making some additions, and the pieces of stone which they hewed off served for this purpose. See here the desperate power of sin and Satan in and over the children of disobedience. Who would think that ever there should be such wickedness as this in men, such an open and daring rebellion against one that undeniably proved himself to be the Son of God? Thus every one has a stone to throw at his holy religion, Acts xxviii. 22.

Secondly, How he made his escape out of their hands. 1. He absconded; Jesus hid himself, ἐκρύβην—he was hid, either by the crowd of those that wished well to him, to shelter him (he that ought to have been upon a throne, high and lifted up, is content to be lost in a crowd); or perhaps he concealed himself behind some of the walls or pillars of the

temple (in the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me, Ps. xxvii. 5); or by a divine power, casting a mist before their eyes, he made himself invisible to them. *When the wicked rise a man is hidden*, a wise and good man, Prov. xxviii. 12, 28. Not that Christ was afraid or ashamed to stand by what he had said, but his hour was not yet come, and he would countenance the flight of his ministers and people in times of persecution, when they are called to it. The Lord hid Jeremiah and Baruch, Jer. xxxvi. 26. 2. He departed, he went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, undiscovered, and so passed by. This was not a cowardly inglorious flight, nor such as argued either guilt or fear. It was foretold concerning him that he should not fail nor be discouraged, Isa. xlii. 4. But, (1.) It was an instance of his power over his enemies, and that they could do no more against him than he gave them leave to do; by which it appears that when afterwards he was taken in their pits he offered himself, ch. x. 18. They now thought they had made sure of him and yet he passed through the midst of them, either their eyes being blinded or their hands tied, and thus he left them to fume, like a lion disappointed of his prey. (2.) It was an instance of his prudent provision for his own safety, when he knew that his work was not done, nor his testimony finished; thus he gave an example to his own rule, *When they persecute you in one city flee to another*; nay, if occasion be, to a wilderness, for so Elijah did (1 Kings xix. 3, 4), and the woman, the church, Rev. xii. 6. When they took up loose stones to throw at Christ, he could have commanded the fixed stones, which did cry out of the wall against them, to avenge his cause, or the earth to open and swallow them up; but he chose to accommodate himself to the state he was in, to make the example imitable by the prudence of his followers, without a miracle. (3.) It was a righteous deserting of those who (worse than the Gadarenes, who prayed him to depart) stoned him from among them. Christ will not long stay with those who bid him be gone. Christ did again visit the temple after this; as one loth to depart, he bade oft farewell; but at last he abandoned it for ever, and left it desolate. Christ now went through the midst of the Jews, and none of them courted his stay, nor stirred up himself to take hold of him, but were even content to let him go. Note, God never forsakes any till they have first provoked him to withdraw, and will have none of him. Calvin observes that these chief priests, when they had driven Christ out of the temple, valued themselves on the possession they kept of it: "But," says he, "those deceive themselves who are proud of a church or temple which Christ has forsaken." *Longe falluntur, cum templum se habere putant Deo vacuum.* When Christ left them it is said that he passed by silently and unobserved: *παρήγεν οὕτως*, so that they

were not aware of him. Note, Christ's departures from a church, or a particular soul, are often *secret*, and not soon taken notice of. *As the kingdom of God comes not, so it goes not, with observation.* See Judg. xvi. 20. *Samson wist not that the Lord was departed from him.* Thus it was with these forsaken Jews, God left them, and they never missed him.

## CHAP. IX.

After Christ's departure out of the temple, in the close of the foregoing chapter, and before this happened which is recorded in this chapter, he had been for some time abroad in the country, it is supposed about two or three months; in which interval of time Dr. Lightfoot and other harmonists place all the passages that occur from Luke x. 17 to xiii. 17. What is recorded ch. vii. and viii. was at the feast of tabernacles, in September; what is recorded in this and the following chapter was at the feast of dedication, in December, ch. x. 22. Mr. Clark and others place this immediately after the foregoing chapter. In this chapter we have, 1. The miraculous cure of a man that was born blind, ver. 1-7. 11. The discourses which were occasioned by it. 1. A discourse of the neighbours among themselves, and with the man, ver. 8-12. 2. Between the Pharisees and the man, ver. 13-34. 3. Between Christ and the poor man, ver. 35-38. 4. Between Christ and the Pharisees, ver. 39 to the end.

AND as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. 4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. 6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, 7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

We have here sight given to a poor beggar that had been blind from his birth. Observe,

I. The notice which our Lord Jesus took of the piteous case of this poor blind man (v. 1): *As Jesus passed by he saw a man which was blind from his birth.* The first words seem to refer to the last of the foregoing chapter, and countenance the opinion of those who in the harmony place this story immediately after that. There it was said, *παρῆγεν—he passed by*, and here, without so much as repeating his name (though our translators supply it) *καὶ παρὰ αὐτόν—and as he passed by*. 1. Though the Jews had so basely abused him, and both by word and deed gave him the highest provocation imaginable, yet he did not miss any opportunity of doing good among them, nor take up a resolution, as justly he might have done, never to have favoured them with any good offices. The cure

of this blind man was a kindness to the public, enabling him to work for his living who before was a charge and burden to the neighbourhood. It is noble, and generous, and Christ-like, to be willing to serve the public, even when we are slighted and disoblinded by them, or think ourselves so. 2. Though he was in his flight from a threatening danger, and escaping for his life, yet he willingly halted and staid awhile to show mercy to this poor man. We make more haste than good speed when we out-run opportunities of doing good. 3. When the Pharisees drove Christ from them, he went to this poor blind beggar. Some of the ancients make this a figure of the bringing of the gospel to the Gentiles, who sat in darkness, when the Jews had rejected it, and driven it from them. 4. Christ took this poor blind man in his way, and cured him in transitu—as he passed by. Thus should we take occasions of doing good, even as we pass by, wherever we are.

Now, (1.) The condition of this poor man was very sad. He was blind, and had been so from his birth. If the light is sweet, how melancholy must it needs be for a man, all his days, to eat in darkness! He that is blind has no enjoyment of the light, but he that is born blind has no idea of it. Methinks such a one would give a great deal to have his curiosity satisfied with but one day's sight of light and colours, shapes and figures, though he were never to see them more. Why is the light of life given to one that is in this misery, that is deprived of the light of the sun, whose way is thus hid, and whom God hath thus hedged in? Job iii. 20-23. Let us bless God that it was not our case. The eye is one of the most curious parts of the body, its structure exceedingly nice and fine. In the formation of animals, it is said to be the first part that appears distinctly discernible. What a mercy is it that there was no miscarriage in the making of ours! Christ cured many that were blind by disease or accident, but here he cured one that was born blind [1.] That he might give an instance of his power to help in the most desperate cases, and to relieve when none else can. [2.] That he might give a specimen of the work of his grace upon the souls of sinners, which gives sight to those that were by nature blind.

(2.) The compassions of our Lord Jesus towards him were very tender. He saw him; that is, he took cognizance of his case, and looked upon him with concern. When God is about to work deliverance, he is said to see the affliction; so Christ saw this poor man. Others saw him, but not as he did. This poor man could not see Christ, but Christ saw him, and anticipated both his prayers and expectations with a surprising cure. Christ is often found of those that seek him not, nor see him, Isa. lxx. 1 And, if we know or apprehend any thing of Christ, it is because we were first known of him (Gal. iv. 9). and apprehended by him, Phil. iii. 12.



II. The discourse between Christ and his disciples concerning this man. When he *devoted out of the temple* they went along with him: for these were they that *continued with him in his temptations*, and followed him whithersoever he went; and they lost nothing by their adherence to him, but gained experience abundantly. Observe,

1. The question which the disciples put to their Master upon this blind man's case, *v. 2*. When Christ looked upon him, they had an eye to him too; Christ's compassion should kindle ours. It is probable that Christ told them this poor man was born blind, or they knew it by common fame; but they did not move Christ to heal him. Instead of this, they started a very odd question concerning him: *Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?* Now this question of theirs was,

(1.) *Uncharitably censorious*. They take it for granted that this extraordinary calamity was the punishment of some uncommon wickedness, and that this man was a sinner above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem, Luke xiii.

4. For the *barbarous people* to infer, *Surely this man is a murderer*, was not so strange; but it was *inexcusable* in them, who knew the scriptures, who had read that *all things come alike to all*, and knew that it was adjudged in Job's case that the greatest sufferers are not therefore to be looked upon as the greatest sinners. The grace of repentance calls our own afflictions *punishments*, but the grace of charity calls the afflictions of others *trials*, unless the contrary is very evident.

(2.) It was *unnecessarily curious*. Concluding this calamity to be inflicted for some very heinous crime, they ask, *Who were the criminals, this man or his parents?* And what was this to them? Or what good would it do them to know it? We are apt to be more inquisitive concerning other people's sins than concerning our own; whereas, it is more our concern to know wherefore God contends with us than wherefore he contends with others; for to judge ourselves is our duty, but to judge our brother is our sin. They enquire, [1.] Whether this man was punished thus for some sin of his own, either committed or foreseen before his birth. Some think that the disciples were tainted with the Pythagorean notion of the *pre-existence* of souls, and their *transmigration* from one body to another. Was this man's soul condemned to the dungeon of this blind body to punish it for some great sin committed in another body which it had before animated? The Pharisees seem to have had the same opinion of his case when they said, *Thou wast altogether born in sin* (*v. 34*), as if all those, and those only, were born in sin whom nature had *stigmatized*. Or, [2.] Whether he was punished for the wickedness of his parents, which God sometimes *visits upon the children*. It is a good reason why parents should take heed of sin, lest their children

smart for it when they are gone. Let not us thus be cruel to our own, as the *ostrich in the wilderness*. Perhaps the disciples asked this, not as believing that this was the punishment of some actual sin of his own or his parents, but Christ having intimated to another patient that his sin was the cause of his impotency (*ch. v. 14*), "Master," say they, "whose sin is the cause of this impotency?" Being at a loss what construction to put upon this providence, they desire to be informed. The equity of God's dispensations is always certain, for *his righteousness is as the great mountains*, but not always to be accounted for, for *his judgments are a great deep*.

2. Christ's answer to this question. He was always *apt to teach*, and to rectify his disciples' mistakes.

(1.) He gives the reason of this poor man's blindness: "*Neither has this man sinned nor his parents*, but he was born blind, and has continued so to this day, that now at last the *works of God should be made manifest in him*,"

*v. 3*. Here Christ, who perfectly knew the secret springs of the divine counsels, told them two things concerning such uncommon calamities:—[1.] That they are not always inflicted as punishments of sin. The sinfulness of the whole race of mankind does indeed justify God in all the miseries of human life; so that those who have the least share of them must say that God is *kind*, and those who have the largest share must not say that he is *unjust*; but many are made much more *miserable* than others in this life who are not at all more *sinful*. Not but that this man was a sinner, and his parents sinners, but it was not any uncommon guilt that God had an eye to in inflicting this upon him. Note, We must take heed of judging any to be great sinners merely because they are great sufferers, lest we be found, not only *persecuting those whom God has smitten* (Ps. lxi. 26), but accusing those whom he has justified, and *condemning those for whom Christ died*, which is daring and dangerous, Rom. viii. 33, 34. [2.] That they are sometimes intended purely for *the glory of God*, and the *manifesting of his works*. God has a sovereignty over all his creatures and an exclusive right in them, and may make them serviceable to his glory in such a way as he thinks fit, in doing or suffering; and if God be glorified, either by us or in us, we were not made *in vain*. This man was *born blind*, and it was worth while for him to be so, and to continue thus long dark, that the *works of God might be manifest in him*. That is, *First*, That the *attributes of God* might be made manifest in him: his justice in making sinful man liable to such grievous calamities; his ordinary power and goodness in supporting a poor man under such a grievous and tedious affliction, especially that his extraordinary power and goodness might be manifested in curing him. Note, The difficulties of providence, otherwise unaccountable, may be resolved into his

—God intends in them to *show himself*, to declare his glory, to make himself to be taken notice of. Those who regard him not in the ordinary course of things are sometimes alarmed by things extraordinary. How contentedly then may a good man be a *loser in his comforts*, while he is sure that thereby God will be one way or other a *gainer in his glory*! Secondly, That the counsels of God concerning the Redeemer might be manifested in him. He was *born blind* that our Lord Jesus might have the honour of *curing him*, and might therein prove himself sent of God to be the true light to the world. Thus the fall of man was permitted, and the *blindness* that followed it, that the works of God might be manifest in *opening the eyes of the blind*. It was now a great while since this man was born blind, and yet it never appeared till now *why* he was so. Note, The intentions of Providence commonly do not appear till a great while after the event, perhaps *many years* after. The sentences in the book of providence are sometimes *long*, and you must read a great way before you can apprehend the sense of them.

(2.) He gives the reason of his own forwardness and readiness to help and heal him. v. 4, 5. It was not for ostentation, but in pursuance of his undertaking: *I must work the works of him that sent me* (of which this is one), *while it is day*, and working time; *the night cometh*, the period of that day, *when no man can work*. This is not only a reason why Christ was constant in doing good to the souls and bodies of men, but why particularly he did this, though it was the sabbath day, on which works of necessity might be done, and he proves this to be a work of necessity.

[1.] It was his Father's will: *I must work the works of him that sent me*. Note, First, The Father, when he sent his Son into the world, gave him *work to do*; he did not come into the world to take state, but to do business; whom God sends he employs, for he sends none to be idle. Secondly, The works Christ had to do were the *works of him that sent him*, not only appointed by him, but done for him; he was a worker together with God. Thirdly, He was pleased to lay himself under the strongest obligations to do the business he was sent about: *I must work*. He engaged his heart, in the covenant of redemption, to draw near, and approach to God as Mediator, Jer. xxx. 21. Shall we be willing to be loose, when Christ was willing to be bound? Fourthly, Christ, having laid himself under obligations to do his work, laid out himself with the utmost vigour and industry in his work. He worked the works he had to do; did ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα—made a business of that which was his business. It is not enough to look at our work, and talk over it, but we must work it.

[2.] Now was his opportunity: *I must work while it is day*, while the time lasts which is appointed to work in, and while the light lasts which is given to work by. Christ

himself had *his day*. First, All the business of the *mediatorial kingdom* was to be done within the limits of time, and in this world; for at the end of the world, when time shall be no more, the *kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father*, and the *mystery of God finished*. Secondly, All the work he had to do in his own person here on earth was to be done *before his death*; the time of his living in this world is *the day* here spoken of. Note, The time of our life is our day, in which it concerns us to do the *work of the day*. Day-time is the proper season for work (Ps. civ. 22, 23); during the day of life we must be busy, not waste *day-time*, nor play by *day-light*; it will be time enough to rest when our day is done, for it is *but a day*.

[3.] The period of his opportunity was at hand, and therefore he would be busy: *The night comes when no man can work*. Note, The consideration of our death approaching should quicken us to improve all the opportunities of life, both for doing and getting good. *The night comes*, it will come certainly, may come suddenly, is coming nearer and nearer. We cannot compute how nigh our sun is, it may go down at noon; nor can we promise ourselves a twilight between the day of life and the night of death. When the night comes we *cannot work*, because the light afforded us to work by is *extinguished*; the grave is a land of darkness, and our work cannot be done *in the dark*. And, besides, our time allotted us for our work will then have *expired*; when our Master tied us to duty he tied us to time too; when night comes, *call the labourers*; we must then *show our work*, and receive according to the things done. In the world of retribution we are no longer probationers; it is too late to *bid* when the inch of candle is *dropped*. Christ uses this as an argument with himself to be diligent, though he had no opposition from within to struggle with; much more need have we to work upon our hearts these and the like considerations to quicken us.

[4.] His business in the world was to enlighten it (v. 5): *As long as I am in the world*, and that will not be long, *I am the light of the world*. He had said this before, ch. viii. 12. He is the *Sun of righteousness*, that has not only light in his wings for those that can see, but healing in his wings, or beams, for those that are blind and cannot see, therein far exceeding in virtue that great light which rules by day. Christ would cure this blind man, the representative of a blind world, because he came to be *the light of the world*, not only to give light, but to give sight. Now this gives us, First, A great encouragement to come to him, as a guiding, quickening, refreshing light. To whom should we look but to him? Which way should we turn our eyes, but to the light? We partake of the sun's light, and so we may of Christ's grace, without money and without price. Secondly, A good example of usefulness in the



world. What Christ saith of himself, he saith of his disciples: *You are lights in the world, and, if so, Let your light shine.* What were candles made for but to burn?

III. The manner of the cure of the blind man, v. 6, 7. The circumstances of the miracle are singular, and no doubt significant. *When he had thus spoken* for the instruction of his disciples, and the opening of their understandings, he addressed himself to the opening of the blind man's eyes. He did not defer it till he could do it either more privately, for his greater safety, or more publicly, for his greater honour, or till the sabbath was past, when it would give less offence. What good we have opportunity of doing we should do quickly; he that will never do a good work till there is nothing to be objected against it will leave many a good work for ever undone, Eccl. xi. 4. In the cure observe,

1. The preparation of the eye-salve. Christ *spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle.* He could have cured him with a word, as he did others, but he chose to do it in this way to show that he is not *tied* to any method. He made clay of his own spittle, because there was no water near; and he would teach us not to be nice or curious, but, when we have at any time occasion, to be willing to take up with that which is *next hand*, if it will but serve the turn. Why should we *go about* for that which may as well be had and done a *nearer way*? Christ's making use of his own spittle intimates that there is healing virtue in every thing that belongs to Christ; clay made of Christ's spittle was much more precious than the balm of Gilead.

2. The application of it to the place: *He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.* Or, as the margin reads it, *He spread (ἐπέχρισεν), he daubed the clay upon the eyes of the blind man*, like a tender physician; he did it himself with his own hand, though the patient was a beggar. Now Christ did this, (1.) To magnify his power in making a blind man to see by that method which one would think more likely to make a seeing man blind. Daubing clay on the eyes would *close them* up, but never *open them*. Note, The power of God often works by contraries; and he makes men feel their own blindness before he gives them sight. (2.) To give an intimation that it was his mighty hand, the very same that at first made man out of the clay; for by him God *made the worlds*, both the great world, and man the little world. Man was *formed out of the clay*, and moulded like the clay, and here Christ used the same materials to give sight to the body that at first he used to give being to it. (3.) To represent and typify the healing and opening of the eyes of the mind by the grace of Jesus Christ. The design of the gospel is to *open men's eyes*, Acts, xxvi. 18. Now the eye-salve that does the work is of Christ's preparing; it is made up, not as this, of his spittle, but of his blood, the blood and water that came

out of his pierced side; we must come to Christ for the eye-salve, Rev. iii. 18. He only is *able*, and he only is *appointed*, to make it up, Luke iv. 18. The means used in this work are very weak and unlikely, and are made effectual only by the power of Christ; when a dark world was to be enlightened, and nations of blind souls were to have their eyes opened, God chose the *foolish things, and weak, and despised*, for the doing of it. And the method Christ takes is first to make men feel themselves blind, as this poor man did whose eyes were daubed with clay, and then to give them sight. Paul in his conversion was *struck blind* for three days, and then the *scales fell from his eyes*. The way prescribed for getting spiritual wisdom is, *Let a man become a fool, that he may be wise*, 1 Cor. iii. 18. We must be made uneasy with our blindness, as this man here, and then healed.

3. The directions given to the patient, v. 7. His physician said to him, *Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.* Not that this washing was needful to effect the cure; but, (1.) Christ would hereby try his obedience, and whether he would with an implicit faith obey the orders of one he was so much a stranger to. (2.) He would likewise try how he stood affected to the tradition of the elders, which taught, and perhaps had taught him (for many that are *blind* are very knowing), that it was not lawful to wash the eyes, no not with spittle medicinally, on the sabbath day, much less to go to a pool of water to wash them. (3.) He would hereby represent the method of spiritual healing, in which, though the effect is owing purely to his power and grace, there is duty to be done by us. Go, search the scriptures, attend upon the ministry, converse with the wise; this is like washing in the pool of Siloam. Promised graces must be expected in the way of instituted ordinances. The waters of baptism were to those who had been trained up in darkness like the pool of Siloam, in which they might not only wash and be clean, but *wash, and have their eyes opened*. Hence they that were baptized are said to be *φωτισθέντες*—*enlightened*; and the ancients called baptism *φωτισμός*—*illumination*. Concerning the pool of Siloam observe, [1.] That it was supplied with water from mount Zion, so that these were the *waters of the sanctuary* (Ps. xlv. 4), living waters, which were *healing*, Ezek. xlvii. 9. [2.] That the waters of Siloam had of old signified the throne and kingdom of the house of David, pointing at the Messiah (Isa. viii. 6), and the Jews who *refused the waters of Siloam*, Christ's doctrine and law, and rejoiced in the tradition of the elders. Christ would try this man, whether he would cleave to the waters of Siloam or no. [3.] The evangelist takes notice of the signification of the name, its being interpreted *sent*. Christ is often called the *sent of God*, the Messenger of the covenant (Mal. iii. 1)

so that when Christ sent him to the pool of Siloam he did in effect send him to himself; for Christ is *all in all* to the healing of souls. Christ as a prophet directs us to himself as a priest *Go, wash in the fountain opened, a fountain of life, not a pool.*

4. The patient's obedience to these directions: *He went his way therefore*, probably led by some friend or other; or perhaps he was so well acquainted with Jerusalem that he could find the way himself. Nature often supplies the want of sight with an uncommon sagacity; and *he washed his eyes*; probably the disciples, or some stander by, informed him that he who bade him do it was that Jesus whom he had heard so much of, else he would not have gone, at his bidding, on that which looked so much like a fool's errand; in confidence of Christ's power, as well as in obedience to his command, he went, and washed.

5. The cure effected: *He came seeing.* There is more glory in this concise narrative, *He went and washed, and came seeing*, than in Cæsar's *Veni, vidi, vici—I came, I saw, I conquered*. When the clay was washed off from his eyes, all the other impediments were removed with it; so when the pangs and struggles of the new birth are over, and the pains and terrors of conviction past, the bands of sin fly off with them, and a glorious light and liberty succeed. See here an instance, (1.) Of the power of Christ. What cannot he do who could not only do *this*, but do it *thus*? With a lump of clay laid on either eye, and washed off again, he couched those cataracts immediately which the most skilful oculist, with the finest instrument and the most curious hand, could not remove. No doubt this is *he that should come*, for by him the blind receive their sight. (2.) It is an instance of the virtue of faith and obedience. This man let Christ do what he pleased, and did what he appointed him to do, and so was cured. Those that would be healed by Christ must be ruled by him. *He came back* from the pool to his neighbours and acquaintance, wondering and wondered at; *he came seeing.* This represents the benefit gracious souls find in attending on instituted ordinances, according to Christ's appointment; they have gone to the pool of Siloam weak, and have come away strengthened; have gone doubting, and come away satisfied; have gone mourning, and come away rejoicing; have gone trembling, and come away triumphing; have gone *blind*, and come away *seeing*, come away singing, Isa. lii. 8.

8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? 9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. 10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine

eyes opened? 11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. 12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

Such a wonderful event as the giving of sight to a man born blind could not but be the talk of the town, and many heeded it no more than they do other town-talk, that is but nine days' wonder; but here we are told what the neighbours said of it, for the confirmation of the matter of fact. That which at first was not believed without *scrutiny* may afterwards be admitted without *scruple*. Two things are debated in this conference about it:—

I. Whether this was the same man that had before been blind, v. 8.

1. The neighbours that lived near the place where he was born and bred, and knew that he had been blind, could not but be amazed when they saw that he had his eye-sight, had it on a sudden, and perfectly; and they said, *Is not this he that sat and begged?* It seems, this blind man was a common beggar, being disabled to work for his living; and so discharged from the obligation of the law, that if *any would not work, neither should he eat.* When he could not go about, he *sat*; if we cannot *work* for God, we must *sit still* quietly for him. When he could not labour, his parents not being able to maintain him, he *begged*. Note, Those who cannot otherwise subsist must not, like the unjust steward, be *ashamed to beg*; let no man be ashamed of any thing but sin. There are some common beggars that are objects of charity, that should be distinguished; and we must not let the bees starve for the sake of the drones or wasps that are among them. As to this man, (1.) It was well ordered by Providence that he on whom this miracle was wrought should be a common beggar, and so generally known and remarkable, by which means the truth of the miracle was the better attested, and there were more to witness against those infidel Jews who would not believe *that he had been blind* than if he had been maintained in his father's house. (2.) It was the greater instance of Christ's condescension that he seemed (as I may say) to take more pains about the cure of a common beggar than of others. When it was for the advantage of his miracles that they should be wrought on those that were remarkable, he pitched upon those that were made so by their poverty and misery, not by their dignity.

2. In answer to this enquiry, (1.) Some said, *This is he*, the very same man; and these are witnesses to the truth of the miracle, for they had long known him stone-blind. (2.) Others, who could not think it possible



that a man born blind should thus on a sudden receive his sight, for that reason, and no other, said, *He is not he, but is like him*, and so, by their confession, if it be he, it is a great miracle that is wrought upon him. Hence we may take occasion to think, [1.] Of the wisdom and power of Providence in ordering such a universal variety of the faces of men and women, so that no two are so alike but that they may be distinguished, which is necessary to society, and commerce, and the administration of justice. And, [2.] Of the wonderful change which the converting grace of God makes upon some who before were very wicked and vile, but are thereby so universally and visibly altered that one would not take them to be the same persons.

3. This controversy was soon decided by the man himself: *He said, I am he*, the very man that so lately sat and begged; "I am he that was blind, and was an object of the charity of men, but now see, and am a monument of the mercy and grace of God." We do not find that the neighbours appealed to him in this matter, but he, hearing the debate, interposed, and put an end to it. It is a piece of justice we owe to our neighbours to rectify their mistakes, and to set things before them, as far as we are able, in a true light. Applying it spiritually, it teaches us that those who are savingly enlightened by the grace of God should be ready to own what they were before that blessed change was wrought, 1 Tim. i. 13, 14.

II. How he came to have his eyes opened, 10—12. They will now turn aside, and cern *his great sight*, and enquire further concerning it. He did not *sound a trumpet* when a *stage*; ~~these~~ alms, nor perform his cures upon could not be ~~but~~ yet, like a city upon a hill, they bours enquire after it. Two things these neigh-

1. The manner of ~~the~~ eyes opened? The ~~was~~ cure: *How were thine great*, they ought to be ~~of~~ of the Lord being

2. It is good to observe the ~~what~~ out, Ps. cxi. of God's works, and they ~~what~~ more wonderful. We may apply it and method it is strange that blind eyes should be ~~open~~ but more strange when we consider ~~how~~ they are opened; how weak the means ~~opened~~ are used, and how strong the opposition they are conquered. In answer to this enquiry ~~that~~ poor man gives them a plain and full account of the matter: *A man that is called Jesus made clay,—and I received sight. v. 11.* Note, Those who have experienced special instances of God's power and goodness, in temporal or spiritual things, should be ready upon all occasions to communicate their experiences, for the glory of God and the instruction and encouragement of others. See David's collection of his experiences, his own and others', Ps. xxxiv. 4—6. It is a debt we owe to our benefactor, and to our brethren. God's favours are lost upon us, when they are lost with us, and go no further.

2. The author of it (v. 12): *Where is he?* Some perhaps asked this question out of curiosity. "Where is he, that we may see him?" A man that did such cures as these might well be a show, which one would go a good way for the sight of. Others, perhaps, asked out of ill-will. "Where is he, that we may *seize* him?" There was a proclamation out for the discovering and apprehending of him (ch. xi. 57); and the unthinking crowd, in spite of all reason and equity, will have ill thoughts of those that are put into an ill name. Some, we hope, asked this question out of *good-will*. "Where is he, that we may be acquainted with him? Where is he, that we may come to him, and share in the favours he is so free of?" In answer to this, he could say nothing: *I know not*. As soon as Christ had sent him to the pool of Siloam, it should seem, he withdrew immediately (as he did, ch. v. 13), and did not stay till the man returned, as if he either doubted of the effect or waited for the man's thanks. Humble souls take more pleasure in *doing good* than in hearing of it again; it will be time enough to hear of it in the *resurrection of the just*. The man had never seen Jesus, for by the time that he had gained his sight he had lost his Physician; and he asked, it is probable, *Where is he?* None of all the new and surprising objects that presented themselves could be so grateful to him as one sight of Christ, but as yet he knew no more of him than that he was called, and rightly called, *Jesus—a Saviour*. Thus in the work of grace wrought upon the soul we see the change, but see not the hand that makes it; for the way of the Spirit is like that of the wind, which thou hearest the sound of, but canst not tell *whence it comes nor whither it goes*.

13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. 14 And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes: 15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. 16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. 17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. 18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him

that had received his sight. 19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? 20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: 21 But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. 22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. 24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. 25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. 26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? 27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples? 28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. 29 We know that God spake unto Moses: *as for this fellow*, we know not from whence he is. 30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. 31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. 32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. 33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. 34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

One would have expected that such a miracle as Christ wrought upon the blind man would have settled his reputation, and silenced and shamed all opposition, but it had

the contrary effect; instead of being embraced as a prophet for it, he is prosecuted as a criminal.

I. Here is the information that was given in to the Pharisees concerning this matter: *They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind*, v. 13. They brought him to the great sanhedrim, which consisted chiefly of Pharisees, at least the Pharisees in the sanhedrim were most active against Christ. 1. Some think that those who brought this man to the Pharisees did it with a *good design*, to show them that this Jesus, whom they persecuted, was not what they represented him, but really a great man, and one that gave considerable proofs of a divine mission. What hath convinced us of the truth and excellency of religion, and hath removed our prejudices against it, we should be forward, as we have opportunity, to offer to others for their conviction. 2. It should seem, rather, that they did it with an *ill design*, to exasperate the Pharisees the more against Christ, and there was no need of this, for they were bitter enough of themselves. They brought him with such a suggestion as that in ch. xi. 47, 48, *If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him*. Note, Those rulers that are of a persecuting spirit shall never want ill instruments about them, that will blow the coals, and make them worse.

II. The ground which was pretended for this information, and the colour given to it. That which is good was never malignèd but under the imputation of something evil. And the crime objected here (v. 14) was that *it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes*. The profanation of the sabbath day is certainly wicked, and gives a man a very ill character; but the traditions of the Jews had made that to be a violation of the law of the sabbath which was far from being so. Many a time this matter was contested between Christ and the Jews, that it might be settled for the benefit of the church in all ages. But it may be asked, "Why would Christ not only work miracles on the sabbath day, but work them in such a manner as he knew would give offence to the Jews? When he had healed the impotent man, why should he bid him carry his bed? Could he not have cured this blind man without making clay?" I answer, 1. He would not seem to yield to the usurped power of the scribes and Pharisees. Their government was illegal, their impositions were arbitrary, and their zeal for the rituals consumed the substantials of religion; and therefore Christ would not give place to them, *by subjection, no not for an hour*. Christ was made under the law of God, but not under their law. 2. He did it that he might, both by word and action, expound the law of the fourth commandment, and vindicate it from their corrupt glosses, and so teach us that a weekly sabbath is to be *perpetually* observed in the church, one



day in seven (for what need was there to explain that law, if it must be presently abrogated?) and that it is not to be so *ceremonially* observed by us as it was by the Jews? Works of necessity and mercy are allowed, and the sabbath-rest to be kept, not so much for its own sake as in order to the sabbath-work. 3. Christ chose to work his cures on the sabbath day to dignify and sanctify the day, and to intimate that spiritual cures should be wrought mostly on the Christian sabbath day. How many blind eyes have been opened by the preaching of the gospel, that blessed eye-salve, on the Lord's day! How many impotent souls cured on that day!

III. The trial and examination of this matter by the Pharisees, v. 15. So much passion, prejudice, and ill-humour, and so little reason, appear here, that the discourse is nothing but crossing questions. One would think, when a man in these circumstances was brought before them, they would have been so taken up in admiring the miracle, and congratulating the happiness of the poor man, that they could not have been peevish with him. But their enmity to Christ had divested them of all manner of humanity, and divinity too. Let us see how they teased this man.

1. They interrogated him concerning the cure itself.

(1.) They doubted whether he had indeed been *born blind*, and demanded proof of that which even the prosecutors had acknowledged (v. 18): They *did not believe*, that is, they would not, that he was *born blind*. Men that seek occasion to quarrel with the clearest truths may find it if they please; and they that resolve to *hold fast deceit* will never want a handle to hold it by. This was not a prudent caution, but a prejudiced infidelity. However, it was a good way that they took for the clearing of this: They *called the parents of the man who had received his sight*. This they did in hopes to disprove the miracle. These parents were poor and timorous, and if they had said that they could not be sure that this was their son, or that it was only some weakness or dimness in his sight that he had been born with, which if they had been able to get help for him might have been cured long since, or had otherwise prevaricated, for fear of the court, the Pharisees had gained their point, had robbed Christ of the honour of this miracle, which would have lessened the reputation of all the rest. But God so ordered and overruled this counsel of theirs that it turned to the more effectual proof of the miracle, and left them under a necessity of being either convinced or confounded. Now in this part of the examination we have,

[1.] The questions that were put to them (v. 19): They *asked them* in an imperious threatening way, "*Is this your son?*" Dare you swear to it? *Do you say he was born blind?* Are you sure of it? Or did he but pretend to be so, to have an excuse for his begging? *How then doth he now see?* That

is impossible; and therefore you had better unsay it." Those who cannot bear the light of truth do all they can to *eclipse* it, and hinder the discovery of it. Thus the *managers of evidence*, or mismanagers rather, lead witnesses out of the way, and teach them how to conceal or disguise the truth, and so involve themselves in a double guilt, like that of Jeroboam, who sinned, and made Israel to sin. [2.] Their answers to these interrogatories, in which,

*First*, They fully attest that which they could safely say in this matter; *safely*, that is, upon their own knowledge, and *safely*, that is, without running themselves into a *premunire* (v. 20): *We know that this is our son* (for they were daily conversant with him, and had such a natural affection to him as the true mother had (1 Kings iii. 26), which made them know it was *their own*); and we know that he was *born blind*. They had reason to know it, inasmuch as it had cost them many a sad thought, and many a careful troublesome hour, about him. How often had they looked upon him with grief, and lamented their child's blindness more than all the burdens and inconveniences of their poverty, and wished he had never been born, rather than be born to such an uncomfortable life! Those who are ashamed of their children, or any of their relations, because of their bodily infirmities, may take a reproof from these parents, who freely owned, *This is our son*, though he was *born blind*, and lived upon alms.

*Secondly*, They cautiously decline giving any evidence concerning his cure; partly because they were not themselves eye-witnesses of it, and could say nothing to it of *their own knowledge*; and partly because they found it was a *tender point*, and would not bear to be meddled with. And therefore, having owned that he was *their son* and was *born blind*, further these deponents say not.

a. Observe how warily they express themselves (v. 21): "*By what means he now seeth we know not, or who has opened his eyes we know not*, otherwise than by *hearsay*; we can give no account either by what means or by whose hand it was done." See how the wisdom of this world teaches men to *trim* the matter in critical junctures. Christ was accused as a sabbath-breaker, and as an impostor. Now these parents of the blind man, though they were not eye-witnesses of the cure, were yet fully assured of it, and were bound in gratitude to have borne their testimony to the honour of the Lord Jesus, who had done their son so great a kindness; but they had not courage to do it, and then thought it might serve to atone for their not appearing in favour of him that they said nothing to his prejudice; whereas, in the day of trial, he that is not *apparently* for Christ is justly looked upon as *really* against him, Luke xi. 23; Mark viii. 38. That they might not be further urged in this matter,

they refer themselves and the court to him : *He is of age, ask him, he shall speak for himself.* This implies that while children are not of age (while they are *infants*, such as cannot speak) it is incumbent upon their parents to *speak for them*, speak to God for them in prayer, speak to the church for them in baptism; but, when they are of age, it is fit that they should be asked whether they be willing to stand to that which their parents did for them, and let them speak for themselves. This man, though he was *born blind*, seems to have been of quick understanding above many, which enabled him to speak for himself better than his friends could speak for him. Thus God often by a kind providence makes up in the mind what is wanting in the body, 1 Cor. xii. 23, 24. His parents' turning them over to him was only to save themselves from trouble, and expose him; whereas they that had so great an interest in his *mercies* had reason to embark with him in his *hazards* for the honour of that Jesus who had done so much for them.

b. See the reason why they were so cautious (v. 22, 23): *Because they feared the Jews.* It was not because they would put an honour upon their son, by making him his own advocate, or because they would have the matter cleared by the *best hand*, but because they would shift trouble off from themselves, as most people are in care to do, no matter on whom they throw it. Near is my friend, and near is my child, and perhaps near is my religion, but *neurer is myself*—*Proximus egomet mihi.* But Christianity teaches another lesson, 1 Cor. x. 24; Eeth. viii. 6. Here is,

(a.) The *late law* which the sanhedrim had made. It was agreed and enacted by their authority that, if any man within their jurisdiction did *confess* that Jesus was Christ, *he should be put out of the synagogue.* Observe,

[a.] The crime designed to be punished, and so prevented, by this statute, and that was embracing Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, and manifesting this by any overt-act, which amounted to a confessing of him. They themselves did expect a Messiah, but they could by no means bear to think that this Jesus should be he, nor admit the question whether he were or no, for two reasons:—*First*, Because his precepts were all so contrary to their traditional *laws*. The spiritual worship he prescribed overthrew their formalities; nor did any thing more effectually destroy their singularity and narrow-spiritedness than that universal charity which he taught; humility and mortification, repentance and self-denial, were lessons new to them, and sounded harsh and strange in their ears. *Secondly*, Because his promises and appearances were so contrary to their traditional hopes. They expected a Messiah in outward pomp and splendour, that should not only free the nation from the Roman yoke, but advance the grandeur

of the sanhedrim, and make all the members of it princes and peers: and now to hear of a Messiah whose outward circumstances were all mean and poor, whose first appearance and principal residence were in Galilee, a despised province, who never made his court to them, nor sought their favour, whose followers were neither sword-men nor gown-men, nor any men of honour, but contemptible fishermen, who proposed and promised no redemption but from sin, no consolation of Israel but what is spiritual and divine, and at the same time bade his followers expect the cross, and count upon persecution; this was such a reproach to all the ideas they had formed and filled the minds of their people with, such a blow to their power and interest, and such a disappointment to all their hopes, that they could never be reconciled to it, nor so much as give it a fair or patient hearing, but, right or wrong, it must be *crushed*.

[b.] The penalty to be inflicted for this crime. If any should own himself a disciple of Jesus, he should be deemed and taken as an apostate from the faith of the Jewish church, and a rebel and traitor against the government of it, and should therefore be *put out of the synagogue*, as one that had rendered himself unworthy of the honours, and incapable of the privileges, of their church; he should be excommunicated, and expelled the commonwealth of Israel. Nor was this merely an ecclesiastical censure, which a man that made no conscience of their authority might slight, but it was, in effect, an *outlawry*, which excluded a man from civil commerce and deprived him of his liberty and property. Note, *First*, Christ's holy religion, from its first rise, has been opposed by penal laws made against the professors of it; as if men's consciences would otherwise *naturally* embrace it, this unnatural force has been put upon them. *Secondly*, The church's artillery, when the command of it has fallen into ill hands, has often been turned against itself, and ecclesiastical censures have been made to serve a carnal secular interest. It is no new thing to see those cast out of the synagogue that were the greatest ornaments and blessings of it, and to hear those that expelled them say, *The Lord be glorified*, Isa. lxvi. 5. Now of this edict it is said, 1. That the Jews had agreed it, or *conspired* it. Their consultation and communion herein were a perfect conspiracy against the crown and dignity of the Redeemer, against the Lord and his Anointed. 2. That they had already agreed it. Though he had been but a few months in any public character among them, and, one would think, in so short a time could not have made them jealous of him, yet thus early were they aware of his growing interest, and already agreed to do their utmost to suppress it. He had lately made his escape out of the temple, and, when they saw themselves



baffled in their attempts to take him, they presently took this course, to make it penal for any body to own him. Thus unanimous and thus expeditious are the enemies of the church, and their counsels; but he that *sits in heaven laughs at them, and has them in derision*, and so may we.

(b.) The influence which this law had upon the parents of the blind man. They declined saying any thing of Christ, and shuffled it off to their son, *because they feared the Jews*. Christ had incurred the frowns of the government to do their son a kindness, but they would not incur them to do him any honour. Note, *The fear of man brings a snare* (Prov. xxix. 25), and often makes people deny and disown Christ, and his truths and ways, and act against their consciences. Well, the parents have thus disentangled themselves, and are discharged from any further attendance; let us now go on with the examination of the man himself; the doubt of the Pharisees, whether he was *born blind*, was put out of doubt *by them*; and therefore,

(2.) They enquired of *him* concerning the *manner of the cure*, and made their remarks upon it, v. 15, 16.

[1.] The same question which his neighbours had put to him *now again the Pharisees asked him, how he had received his sight*. This they enquired not with any sincere desire to find out the truth, by tracing the report to the original, but with a desire to find an occasion against Christ; for, if the man should relate the matter fully, they would prove Christ a sabbath-breaker; if he should vary from his former story, they would have some colour to suspect the whole to be a collusion.

[2.] The same answer, in effect, which he had before given to his neighbours, he here repeats to the Pharisees: *He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see*. He does not here speak of the making of the clay, for indeed he had not seen it made. That circumstance was not essential, and might give the Pharisees most occasion against him, and therefore he waives it. In the former account he said, *I washed, and received sight*; but lest they should think it was only a glimpse for the present, which a heated imagination might fancy itself to have, he now says, "*I do see*: it is a complete and lasting cure."

[3.] The remarks made upon this story were very different, and occasioned a debate in the court, v. 16.

First, Some took this occasion to censure and condemn Christ for what he had done. Some of the Pharisees said, *This man is not of God, as he pretends, because he keepeth not the sabbath day*. 1. The doctrine upon which this censure is grounded is very true—that those are *not of God*—those pretenders to prophecy *not sent of God*, those pretenders to saintship *not born of God*—who do not

*keep the sabbath day*. Those that are of God will *keep the commandments of God*; and this is his commandment, that we sanctify the sabbath. Those that are of God keep up communion with God, and delight to hear from him, and speak to him, and therefore will observe the sabbath, which is a day appointed for intercourse with heaven. The sabbath is called a *sign*, for the sanctifying of it is a sign of a sanctified heart, and the profaning of it a sign of a profane heart. But, 2. The application of it to our Saviour is very unjust, for he did religiously observe the sabbath day, and never in any instance violated it, never did otherwise than *well* on the sabbath day. He did not keep the sabbath according to the tradition of the elders and the superstitious observances of the Pharisees, but he kept it according to the command of God, and therefore, no doubt, he was of God, and his miracles proved him to be *Lord also of the sabbath day*. Note, much unrighteous and uncharitable judging is occasioned by men's making the rules of religion more strict than God has made them, and adding their own fancies to God's appointments, as the Jews here, in the case of sabbath-sanctification. We ourselves may forbear such and such things, on the sabbath day, as we find a distraction to us, and we do well, but we must not therefore tie up others to the same strictness. Every thing that we take for a rule of practice must not presently be made a rule of judgment.

Secondly, Others spoke in his favour, and very pertinently urged, *How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?* It seems that even in this *council of the ungodly* there were some that were capable of a *free thought*, and were witnesses for Christ, even in the midst of his enemies. The matter of fact was plain, that this was a true miracle, the more it was searched into the more it was cleared; and this brought his former similar works to mind, and gave occasion to speak magnificently of them, *τοιαῦτα σημεῖα*—such great signs, so many, so evident. And the inference from it is very natural: Such things as these could never be done by a *man that is a sinner*, that is, not by any mere man, in his own name, and by his own power; or, rather, not by one that is a cheat or an impostor, and in that sense a sinner; such a one may indeed show some signs and lying wonders, but not such signs and true wonders as Christ wrought. How could a man produce such divine credentials, if he had not a divine commission? Thus there was a *division among them, a schism*, so the word is; they clashed in their opinion, a warm debate arose, and the *house divided* upon it. Thus God defeats the counsels of his enemies by dividing them; and by such testimonies as these given against the malice of persecutors, and the rubs they meet with, their designs against the church are sometimes rendered ineffectual and always inexcusable

2. After their enquiry concerning the cure, we must observe their enquiry concerning the *author* of it. And here observe,

(1.) What the man said of him, in answer to their enquiry. They ask him (v. 17), "*What sayest thou of him, seeing that he has opened thine eyes?*" What dost thou think of his doing this? And what idea hast thou of him that did it?" If he should speak *slightly* of Christ, in answer to this, as he might be tempted to do, to please them, now that he was in their hands, as his parents had done—if he should say, "I know not what to make of him; he may be a conjuror for aught I know, or some mountebank"—they would have triumphed in it. Nothing confirms Christ's enemies in their enmity to him so much as the slights put upon him by those that have passed for his friends. But, if he should speak honourably of Christ, they would prosecute him upon their new law, which did not except, no, not his own patient; they would make him an example, and so deter others from applying to Christ for cures, for which, though they came cheap from Christ, yet they would make them pay dearly. Or perhaps Christ's friends proposed to have the man's own sentiments concerning his physician, and were willing to know, since he appeared to be a sensible man, what he thought of him. Note, Those whose eyes Christ has opened know best what to say of him, and have great reason, upon all occasions, to say well of him. What think we of Christ? To this question the poor man makes a short, plain, and direct answer: "*He is a prophet*, he is one inspired and sent of God to preach, and work miracles, and deliver to the world a divine message." There had been no prophets among the Jews for three hundred years; yet they did not conclude that they should have no more, for they knew that he was yet to come who should *seal up vision and prophecy*, Dan. ix. 24. It should seem, this man had not any thoughts that Christ was the Messiah, the great prophet, but one of the same rank with the other prophets. The woman of Samaria concluded he was a *prophet* before she had any thought of his being the Messiah (ch. iv. 19); so this blind man thought well of Christ according to the light he had, though he did not think well enough of him; but, being faithful in what he had already attained to, God revealed even *that* unto him. This poor blind beggar had a clearer judgment of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and saw further into the proofs of a divine mission than the *masters in Israel*, that assumed an authority to judge of prophets.

(2.) What they said of him in reply to the man's testimony. Having in vain attempted to invalidate the evidence of the fact, and finding that indeed a *notable miracle was wrought*, and they could not deny it, they renew their attempt to banter it, and run it down, and do all they can to shake the good

opinion the man had of him that opened his eyes, and to convince him that Christ was a bad man (v. 24): *Give God the praise, we know that this man is a sinner*. Two ways this is understood: [1.] By way of *advice*, to take heed of ascribing the praise of his cure to a sinful man, but to give it all to God, to whom it was due. Thus, under colour of zeal for the honour of God, they rob Christ of his honour, as those do who will not worship Christ as God, under pretence of zeal for this great truth, that there is but one God to be worshipped; whereas this is his declared will, that all men should *honour the Son even as they honour the Father*; and in confessing that Christ is Lord we *give glory to God the Father*. When God makes use of men that are sinners as instruments of good to us, we must *give God the glory*, for every creature is that to us which he makes it to be; and yet there is gratitude owing to the instruments. It was a good word, *Give God the praise*, but here it was ill used; and there seems to be this further in it, "This man is a *sinner*, a *bad man*, and therefore give the praise so much the more to God, who could work by such an instrument."

[2.] By way of *adjection*; so some take it. "We know (though thou dost not, who hast but lately come, as it were, into a new world) that this man is a *sinner*, a great impostor, that cheats the country; this we are sure of, therefore *give God praise*" (as Joshua said to Achan) "by making an ingenuous confession of the fraud and collusion which we are confident there is in this matter; in God's name, man, tell the truth." Thus is God's name abused in papal inquisitions, when by oaths, *ex officio*, they extort accusations of *themselves* from the *innocent*, and of *others* from the *ignorant*. See how basely they speak of the Lord Jesus: *We know that this man is a sinner*, is a man of sin. In which we may observe, *First*, Their insolence and pride. They would not have it thought, when they asked the man what he thought of him, that they needed information; nay, they know very well that he is a sinner, and nobody can convince them of the contrary. He had challenged them to their faces (ch. viii. 46) to *convince him of sin*, and they had nothing to say; but now behind his back they speak of him as a malefactor, convicted upon the notorious evidence of the fact. Thus false accusers make up in confidence what is wanting in proof. *Secondly*, The injury and indignity hereby done to the Lord Jesus. When he became man, he took upon him the form not only of a *servant*, but of a *sinner* (Rom. viii. 3), and passed for a sinner in common with the rest of mankind. Nay, he was represented as a sinner of the first magnitude, a sinner above all men; and, being *made sin for us*, he despised even this shame.

3. The debate that arose between the Pharisees and this poor man concerning Christ. They say, *He is a sinner*; he says, *He is a*



*prophet.* As it is an encouragement to those who are concerned for the cause of Christ to hope that it shall never be lost for want of witnesses, when they find a poor blind beggar picked up from the way-side, and made a witness for Christ, to the faces of his most impudent enemies; so it is an encouragement to those who are called out to witness for Christ to find with what prudence and courage this man managed his defence, according to the promise, *It shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak.* Though he had never seen Jesus, he had felt his grace. Now in the parley between the Pharisees and this poor man we may observe three steps:—

(1.) He sticks to the certain matter of fact the evidence of which they endeavour to shake. That which is doubtful is best resolved into that which is plain, and therefore, [1.] He adheres to that which to himself at least, and to his own satisfaction, was past dispute (v. 25): "*Whether he be a sinner or no I know not, I will not now stand to dispute, nor need I, the matter is plain, and though I should altogether hold my peace would speak for itself;*" or, as it might better be rendered, "*If he be a sinner, I know it not, I see no reason to say so, but the contrary; for this one thing I know, and can be more sure of than you can be of that of which you are so confident, that whereas I was blind, now I see, and therefore must not only say that he has been a good friend to me, but that he is a prophet; I am both able and bound to speak well of him.*" Now here, *First*, He tacitly reproves their great assurance of the ill character they gave of the blessed Jesus: "You say that you *know* him to be a sinner; I, who know him as well as you do, cannot give him any such character." *Secondly*, He boldly relies upon his own experience of the power and goodness of the holy Jesus, and resolves to abide by it. There is no disputing against experience, nor arguing a man out of his senses; here is one that is properly an eye-witness of the power and grace of Christ, though he had never seen him. Note, As Christ's mercies are most valued by those that have felt the want of them, that have been blind and now see, so the most powerful and durable affections to Christ are those that arise from an experimental knowledge of him, 1 John i. 1; Acts iv. 20. The poor man does not here give a nice account of the method of the cure, nor pretend to describe it *philosophically*, but in short, *Whereas I was blind, now I see.* Thus in the work of grace in the soul, though we cannot tell when and how, by what instruments and by what steps and advances, the blessed change was wrought, yet we may take the comfort of it if we can say, through grace, "*Whereas I was blind, now I see.*" I did live a carnal, worldly, sensual life, but, thanks be to God, it is now otherwise with me," Eph. v. 8. [2.] They endeavour to baffle and stifle the evidence by a needless repetition of their enquiries into

it (v. 26): *What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?* They asked these questions, *First*, Because they wanted something to say, and would rather speak *impertinently* than seem to be silenced or run a-ground. Thus eager disputants, that resolve they will have the last word, by such vain repetitions, to avoid the shame of being silenced, make themselves accountable for many idle words. *Secondly*, Because they hoped, by putting the man upon repeating his evidence, to catch him tripping in it, or wavering, and then they would think they had gained a good point.

(2.) He upbraids them with their obstinate infidelity and invincible prejudices, and they revile him as a disciple of Jesus, v. 27—29, where the man is more bold with them and they are more sharp upon him than before.

[1.] The man boldly upbraids them with their wilful and unreasonable opposition to the evidence of this miracle, v. 27. He would not gratify them with a repetition of the story, but bravely replied, *I have told you already, and you did not hear, wherefore would you hear it again, will you also be his disciples?* Some think that he spoke *seriously*, and really expecting that they would be convinced. "He has many disciples, I will be one, will you also come in among them?" Some zealous young Christians see so much reason for religion that they are ready to think every one will presently be of their mind. But it rather seems to be spoken *ironically*: "*Will you be his disciples?*" No, I know you abhor the thoughts of it; why then should you desire to hear that which will either make you his disciples or leave you inexcusable if you be not?" Those that wilfully shut their eyes against the light, as these Pharisees here did, *First*, Make themselves contemptible and base, as these here did, who were justly exposed by this poor man for denying the conclusion, when they had nothing to object against either of the premises. *Secondly*, They forfeit all the benefit of further instructions and means of knowledge and conviction: they that have been told once, and *would not hear*, why should they be told it again? Jer. li. 9. See Matt. x. 14. *Thirdly*, They hereby *receive the grace of God in vain.* This is implied in that, "*Will you be his disciples?*" No, you resolve you will not; why then would you hear it again, only that you may be his accusers and persecutors?" Those who will not see cause to embrace Christ, and join with his followers, yet, one would think, should see cause enough not to hate and persecute him and them.

[2.] For this they scorn and revile him, v. 28. When they could not resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke, they broke out into a passion, and scolded him, began to call names, and give him ill language. See what Christ's faithful witnesses must expect from the adversaries of his truth and cause;



let them count upon *all manner of evil* to be said of them, Matt. v. 11. The method commonly taken by unreasonable man is to make out with railing what is wanting in truth and reason.

First, They taunted this man for his affection to Christ; they said, *Thou art his disciple*, as if that were reproach enough, and they could not say worse of him. "We scorn to be his disciples, and will leave that preferment to thee, and such scoundrels as thou art." They do what they can to put Christ's religion in an ill name, and to represent the profession of it as a contemptible scandalous thing. They *reviled him*. The Vulgate reads it, *maledixerunt eum—they cursed him*; and what was their curse? It was this, *Be thou his disciple*. "May such a curse" (saith St. Austin here) "ever be on us and on our children!" If we take our measures of credit and disgrace from the sentiment or rather clamours of a blind deluded world, we shall *glory in our shame*, and be *ashamed of our glory*. They had no reason to call this man a *disciple* of Christ, he had neither seen him nor heard him preach, only he had spoken favourably of a kindness Christ had done him, and this they could not bear.

Secondly, They gloried in their relation to Moses as their Master: "*We are Moses's disciples*, and do not either need or desire any other teacher." Note, 1. Carnal professors of religion are very apt to trust to, and be proud of, the dignities and privileges of their profession, while they are strangers to the principles and powers of their religion. These Pharisees had before boasted of their good parentage: *We are Abraham's seed*; here they boast of their good education, *We are Moses's disciples*; as if these would savethem. 2. It is sad to see how much one part of religion is opposed, under colour of zeal for another part. There was a perfect harmony between Christ and Moses; Moses prepared for Christ, and Christ perfected Moses, so that they might be disciples of Moses, and become the disciples of Christ too; and yet they here put them in opposition, nor could they have persecuted Christ but under the shelter of the abused name of Moses. Thus those who gainsay the doctrine of free grace value themselves as promoters of man's duty, *We are Moses's disciples*; while, on the other hand, those that cancel the obligation of the law value themselves as the assertors of free grace, and as if none were the disciples of Jesus but they; whereas, if we rightly understand the matter, we shall see God's grace and man's duty meet together and kiss and befriend each other.

Thirdly, They gave some sort of reason for their adhering to Moses against Christ (v. 29): *We know that God spoke unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not whence he is*. But did they not know that among other things which God spoke unto Moses this was one, that they must expect another prophet, and a

further revelation of the mind of God? yet, when our Lord Jesus, pursuant to what God said to Moses, did appear, and gave sufficient proofs of his being that prophet, under pretence of sticking to the old religion, and the established church, they not only forfeited, but forsook, their own mercies. In this argument of theirs observe, 1. How impertinently they allege, in defence of their enmity to Christ, that which none of his followers ever denied. *We know that God spoke unto Moses*, and, thanks be to God, we know it too, more plainly to Moses than to any other of the prophets; but what then? God spoke to Moses, and does it therefore follow that Jesus is an impostor? Moses was a prophet, it is true, and might not Jesus be a prophet also? Moses spoke honourably of Jesus (ch. v. 46), and Jesus spoke honourably of Moses (Luke xvi. 29); they were both faithful in the same house of God, Moses as a servant, Christ as a Son; therefore their pleading Moses' divine warrant in opposition to Christ's was an artifice, to make unthinking people believe it was as certain that Jesus was a false prophet as that Moses was a true one; whereas they were both true. 2. How absurdly they urge their ignorance of Christ as a reason to justify their contempt of him *As for this fellow*. Thus scornfully do they speak of the blessed Jesus, as if they did not think it worth while to charge their memories with a name so inconsiderable; they express themselves with as much disdain of the Shepherd of Israel as if he had not been worthy to be *set with the dogs of their flock*: *As for this fellow*, this sorry fellow, *we know not whence he is*. They looked upon themselves to have the key of knowledge, that none must preach without a license first had and obtained from them, under the seal of their court. They expected that all who set up for teachers should apply to them, and give them satisfaction, which this Jesus had never done, never so far owned their power as to ask their leave, and therefore they concluded him an intruder, and one that came not in by the door: *They knew not whence nor what he was*, and therefore concluded him a sinner; whereas those we know little of we should judge charitably of; but proud and narrow souls will think none good but themselves, and those that are in their interest. It was not long ago that the Jews had made the contrary to this an objection against Christ (ch. vii. 27): *We know this man whence he is, but when Christ comes no man knows whence he is*. Thus they could with the greatest assurance either affirm or deny the same thing, according as they saw it would serve their turn. *They knew not whence he was*; and whose fault was that? (1.) It is certain that they ought to have enquired The Messiah was to appear about this time, and it concerned them to look about them, and examine every indication; but these priests, like those, Jer. ii. 6, *said not, Where*



is the Lord? (2.) It is certain that they might have known whence he was, might not only have known, by searching the register, that he was born in Bethlehem; but by enquiring into his doctrine, miracles, and conversation, they might have known that he was sent of God, and had better orders, a better commission, and far better instructions, than any they could give him. See the absurdity of infidelity. Men will not know the doctrine of Christ because they are resolved they will not believe it, and then pretend they do not believe it because they do not know it. Such ignorance and unbelief, which support one another, aggravate one another.

(3.) He reasons with them concerning this matter, and they excommunicate him.

[1.] The poor man, finding that he had reason on his side, which they could not answer, grows more bold, and, in prosecution of his argument, is very close upon them.

First, He wonders at their obstinate infidelity (v. 30); not at all daunted by their frowns, nor shaken by their confidence, he bravely answered, "*Why, herein is a marvelous thing, the strangest instance of wilful ignorance that ever was heard of among men that pretend to sense, that you know not whence he is, and yet he has opened mine eyes.*" Two things he wonders at:—1. That they should be strangers to a man so famous. He that could open the eyes of the blind must certainly be a considerable man, and worth taking notice of. The Pharisees were inquisitive men, had a large correspondence and acquaintance, thought themselves the eyes of the church and its watchmen, and yet that they should talk as if they thought it below them to take cognizance of such a man as this, and have conversation with him, this is a strange thing indeed. There are many who pass for learned and knowing men, who understand business, and can talk sensibly in other things, who yet are ignorant, to a wonder, of the doctrine of Christ, who have no concern, no, not so much as a curiosity, to acquaint themselves with that which the angels desire to look into. 2. That they should question the divine mission of one that had undoubtedly wrought a divine miracle. When they said, *We know not whence he is*, they meant, "We know not any proof that his doctrine and ministry are from heaven." "Now this is strange," saith the poor man, "that the miracle wrought upon me has not convinced you, and put the matter out of doubt,—that you, whose education and studies give you advantages above others of discerning the things of God, should thus shut your eyes against the light." It is a marvelous work and a wonder, when the wisdom of the wise thus perisheth (Isa. xxix. 14), that they deny the truth of that of which they cannot gainsay the evidence. Note, (1.) The unbelief of those who enjoy the means of knowledge and conviction is indeed a marvel-

lous thing, Mark v. 6. (2.) Those who have themselves experienced the power and grace of the Lord Jesus do especially wonder at the wilfulness of those who reject him, and, having such good thoughts of him themselves, are amazed that others have not. Had Christ opened the eyes of the Pharisees, they would not have doubted his being a prophet.

Secondly, He argues strongly against them, v. 31—33. They had determined concerning Jesus that he was not of God (v. 16), but was a sinner (v. 24), in answer to which the man here proves not only that he was not a sinner (v. 31), but that he was of God, v. 33.

a. He argues here, (a.) With great knowledge. Though he could not read a letter of the book, he was well acquainted with the scripture and the things of God; he had wanted the sense of seeing, yet had well improved that of hearing, by which faith cometh; yet this would not have served him if he had not had an extraordinary presence of God with him, and special aids of his Spirit, upon this occasion. (b.) With great zeal for the honour of Christ, whom he could not endure to hear run down, and evil spoken of. (c.) With great boldness, and courage, and undauntedness, not terrified by the proudest of his adversaries. Those that are ambitious of the favours of God must not be afraid of the frowns of men. "See here," saith Dr. Whitby, "a blind man and unlearned judging more rightly of divine things than the whole learned council of the Pharisees, whence we learn that we are not always to be led by the authority of councils, popes, or bishops; and that it is not absurd for laymen sometimes to vary from their opinions, these overseers being sometimes guilty of great oversights."

b. His argument may be reduced into form, somewhat like that of David, Ps. lxxvi. 18—20. The proposition in David's argument is, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me*; here it is to the same purport, *God heareth not sinners*: the assumption there is, *But verily God hath heard me*; here it is, *Verily God hath heard Jesus*, he hath been honoured with the doing of that which was never done before: the conclusion there is to the honour of God, *Blessed be God*; here to the honour of the Lord Jesus, *He is of God*.

(a.) He lays it down for an undoubted truth that none but good men are the favourites of heaven (v. 31): *Now we know, you know it as well as I, that God heareth not sinners*; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does his will, him he heareth. Here,

[a.] The assertions, rightly understood, are true. First, Be it spoken to the terror of the wicked, *God heareth not sinners*, that is, such sinners as the Pharisees meant when they said of Christ, *He is a sinner*, one that, under the shelter of God's name, advanced the devil's interest. This bespeaks no discouragement to repenting returning sinners, but

to those that go on still in their trespasses, that make their prayers not only consistent with, but subservient to, their sins, as the hypocrites do; God will not *hear* them, he will not own them, nor give an answer of peace to their prayers. *Secondly*, Be it spoken to the comfort of the righteous, *If any man be a worshipper of God, and does his will, him he heareth*. Here is, 1. The complete character of a good man: he is one that *worships God, and does his will*; he is constant in his devotions at set times, and regular in his conversation at all times. He is one that makes it his business to glorify his Creator by the solemn adoration of his name and a sincere obedience to his will and law; both must go together. 2. The unspeakable comfort of such a man: him *God hears*; hears his complaints, and relieves him; hears his appeals, and rights him; hears his praises, and accepts them; hears his prayers, and answers them, Ps. xxxiv. 15.

[b.] The application of these truths is very pertinent to prove that he, at whose word such a divine power was put forth as cured one born blind, was not a bad man, but, having manifestly such an interest in the holy God as that he *heard him always* (ch. xi. 41, 42), was certainly a holy one.

(b.) He magnifies the miracles which Christ had wrought, to strengthen the argument the more (v. 32): *Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind*. This is to show either, [a.] That it was a true miracle, and above the power of nature; it was never heard that any man, by the use of natural means, had cured one that was *born blind*; no doubt, this man and his parents had been very inquisitive into cases of this nature, whether any such had been helped, and could hear of none, which enabled him to speak this with the more assurance. Or, [b.] That it was an extraordinary miracle, and beyond the precedents of former miracles; neither Moses nor any of the prophets, though they did great things, ever did such things as this, wherein divine power and divine goodness seem to strive which should outshine. Moses wrought miraculous plagues, but Christ wrought miraculous cures. Note, *First*, The wondrous works of the Lord Jesus were such as the like had never been done before. *Secondly*, It becomes those who have received mercy from God to magnify the mercies they have received, and to speak honourably of them; not that thereby glory may redound to themselves, and they may seem to be extraordinary favourites of Heaven, but that God may have so much the more glory.

(c.) He therefore concludes, *If this man were not of God, he could do nothing*, that is, nothing extraordinary, no such thing as *this*; and therefore, no doubt, he is *of God*, notwithstanding his nonconformity to your traditions in the business of the sabbath day. Note, What Christ did on earth sufficiently

demonstrated what he was in heaven; for, if he had not been sent of God, he could not have wrought such miracles. It is true the man of sin comes with *lying wonders*, but not with real miracles; it is likewise supposed that a false prophet might, by divine permission, give a *sign or a wonder* (Deut. xiii. 1, 2), yet the case is so put as that it would carry with it its own confutation, for it is to enforce a temptation to serve other gods, which was to set God *against himself*. It is true, likewise, that many wicked people have in Christ's name done many wonderful works, which did not prove those that wrought them to be of God, but him in whose name they were wrought. We may each of us know by this whether we are of God or no: *What do we?* What do we for God, for our souls, in working out our salvation? What do we more than others?

[2.] The Pharisees, finding themselves unable either to answer his reasonings or to bear them, fell foul upon him, and with a great deal of pride and passion broke off the discourse, v. 34. Here we are told,

*First*, What they *said*. Having nothing to reply to his argument, they reflected upon his person: *Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?* They take that amiss which they had reason to take kindly, and are cut to the heart with rage by that which should have pricked them to the heart with penitence. Observe, 1. How they despised him, and what a severe censure they passed upon him: "*Thou wast not only born in sin, as every man is, but altogether so, wholly corrupt, and bearing about with thee in thy body as well as in thy soul the marks of that corruption; thou wast one whom nature stigmatized*." Had he still continued blind, it had been barbarous to upbraid him with it, and thence to gather that he was more deeply tainted with sin than other people; but it was most unjust to take notice of it now that the cure had not only rolled away the reproach of his blindness, but had *signalized* him as a favourite of Heaven. Some take it thus: "Thou hast been a common beggar, and such are too often common sinners, and thou hast, no doubt, been as bad as any of them;" whereas by his discourse he had proved the contrary, and had evinced a deep tincture of piety. But when proud imperious Pharisees resolve to run a man down, any thing shall serve for a pretence. 2. How they *disdain* to learn of him, or to receive instruction from him: *Dost thou teach us?* A mighty emphasis must be laid here upon *thou* and *us*. "What! wilt *thou*, a silly sorry fellow, ignorant and illiterate, that hast not seen the light of the sun a day to an end, a beggar by the way-side, of the very dregs and refuse of the town, wilt thou pretend to teach *us*, that are the sages of the law and grandees of the church, that sit in Moses's chair and are masters in Israel?" Note. Proud men scorn to be taught, especially by



their inferiors, whereas we should never think ourselves too old, nor too wise, nor too good, to learn. Those that have much wealth would have more; and why not those that have much knowledge? And those are to be valued by whom we may improve in learning. What a poor excuse was this for the Pharisees' infidelity, that it would be a disparagement to them to be instructed, and informed, and convinced, by such a silly fellow as this!

*Secondly*, What they did: They cast him out. Some understand it only of a rude and scornful dismissal of him from their council-board; they turned him out of the room by head and shoulders, and perhaps ordered their servants to kick him; they thought it was time to send him far enough who came so near their consciences. But it seems rather to be a judicial act; they excommunicated him, probably with the highest degree of excommunication; they cut him off from being a member of the church of Israel. "This poor man," says Dr. Lightfoot, "was the first confessor, as John Baptist was the first martyr, of the Christian church." There was a law made that if any confessed Jesus to be the Christ he should be cast out of the synagogue, *v.* 22. But this man had only said of Jesus that he was a prophet, was of God: and yet they stretch the law to bring him under the lash of it, as if he had confessed him to be the Christ. To be justly excommunicated and cast out of a pure church, *clave non errante—when the key commits no error*, is a very dreadful thing; for what is so bound on earth is bound in heaven; but to be cast out of a corrupt church (which it is our duty to go out of) and that unjustly, though cast out with an *anathema*, and all the bug-bear ceremonies of bell, book, and candle, is what we have no reason at all to dread or be aggrieved at. *The curse causeless shall not come*. If they cast Christ's followers out of their synagogues, as he foretells (*ch.* xvi. 2), there is no harm done, when they are become *synagogues of Satan*.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? 36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? 37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. 38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

In these verses we may observe,

I. The tender care which our Lord Jesus took of this poor man (*v.* 35): *When Jesus heard that they had cast him out* (for it is likely the town rang of it, and every body cried out blame upon them for it), then he found him, which implies his seeking him and looking after him, that he might encour-

age and comfort him, 1. Because he had, to the best of his knowledge, spoken so very well, so bravely, so boldly, in defence of the Lord Jesus. Note, Jesus Christ will be sure to stand by his witnesses, and own those that own him and his truth and ways. Earthly princes neither do, nor can, take cognizance of all that vindicate them and their government and administration; but our Lord Jesus knows and observes all the faithful testimonies we bear to him at any time, and a book of remembrance is written, and it shall redound not only to our credit hereafter, but our comfort now. 2. Because the Pharisees had cast him out and abused him. Besides the common regard which the righteous Judge of the world has to those who suffer wrongfully (*Ps.* ciii. 6), there is a particular notice taken of those that suffer in the cause of Christ and for the testimony of a good conscience. Here was one poor man suffering for Christ, and he took care that as his afflictions abounded his consolations should much more abound. Note, (1.) Though persecutors may exclude good men from their communion, yet they cannot exclude them from communion with Christ, nor put them out of the way of his visits. Happy are they who have a friend from whom men cannot debar them. (2.) Jesus Christ will graciously find and receive those who for his sake are unjustly rejected and cast out by men. He will be a hiding place to his outcasts, and appear, to the joy of those whom their brethren hated and cast out.

II. The comfortable converse Christ had with him, wherein he brings him acquainted with the consolation of Israel. He had well improved the knowledge he had, and now Christ gives him further instruction; for he that is faithful in a little shall be entrusted with more, *Matt.* xiii. 12.

1. Our Lord Jesus examines his faith: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Dost thou give credit to the promises of the Messiah? Dost thou expect his coming, and art thou ready to receive and embrace him when he is manifested to thee?" This was that faith of the Son of God by which the saints lived before his manifestation. Observe, (1.) The Messiah is here called the *Son of God*, and so the Jews had learned to call him from the prophecies, *Ps.* ii. 7; *lxxxix.* 27. See *ch.* i. 49, *Thou art the Son of God*, that is, the true Messiah. Those that expected the temporal kingdom of the Messiah delighted rather in calling him the *Son of David*, which gave more countenance to that expectation, *Matt.* xxii. 42. But Christ, that he might give us an idea of his kingdom, as purely spiritual and divine, calls himself the *Son of God*, and rather *Son of man* in general than of David in particular. (2.) The desires and expectations of the Messiah, which the Old-Testament saints had, guided by and grounded upon the promise, were graciously interpreted and ac-



cepted as their believing on the *Son of God*. This faith Christ here enquires after: *Dost thou believe?* Note, The great thing which is now required of us (1 John iii. 23), and which will shortly be enquired after concerning us, is our *believing on the Son of God*, and by this we must stand or fall for ever.

2. The poor man solicitously enquires concerning the Messiah he was to believe in, professing his readiness to embrace him and close with him (v. 36). *Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?* (1.) Some think he did know that Jesus, who cured him, was the Son of God, but did not know which was Jesus, and therefore, supposing this person that talked with him to be a follower of Jesus, desired him to do him the favour to direct him to his master; not that he might satisfy his curiosity with the sight of him, but that he might the more firmly believe in him, and profess his faith, and *know whom he had believed*. See Cant. v. 6, 7; iii. 2, 3. It is Christ only that can direct us to himself. (2.) Others think he did know that this person who talked with him was Jesus, the same that cured him, whom he believed a great and good man and a prophet, but did not yet know that he was the Son of God and the true Messiah. "Lord, I believe there is a Christ to come; thou who hast given me bodily sight, tell me, O tell me, who and where this Son of God is." Christ's question intimated that the Messiah was come, and was now among them, which he presently takes the hint of, and asks, *Where is he, Lord?* The question was rational and just: *Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?* For how could he believe in one of whom he had not heard; the work of ministers is to tell us *who the Son of God is*, that we may believe on him, ch. xx. 31.

3. Our Lord Jesus graciously reveals himself to him as that Son of God on whom he must believe: *Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee*, v. 37. Thou needest not go far to find out the Son of God, *Behold the Word is nigh thee*. We do not find that Christ did thus expressly, and in so many words, reveal himself to any other as to this man here and to the woman of Samaria: *I that speak unto thee am he*. He left others to find out by arguments who he was, but to these weak and foolish things of the world he chose to manifest himself, so as not to the *wise and prudent*. Christ here describes himself to this man by two things, which express his great favour to him:—(1.) *Thou hast seen him*; and he was much indebted to the Lord Jesus for opening his eyes, that he might see him. Now he was made sensible, more than ever, what an unspeakable mercy it was to be cured of his blindness, that he might see the Son of God, a sight which rejoiced his heart more than that of the *light of this world*. Note, The greatest comfort

of bodily eyesight is its serviceableness to our faith and the interests of our souls. How contentedly might this man have returned to his former blindness, like old Simeon, now that his eyes had seen *God's salvation*! If we apply this to the opening of the eyes of the mind, it intimates that spiritual sight is given principally for this end, that we may see Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Can we say that by faith we have seen Christ, seen him in his beauty and glory, in his ability and willingness to save, so seen him as to be satisfied concerning him, to be satisfied in him? Let us give him the praise, who opened our eyes. (2.) *It is he that talketh with thee*; and he was indebted to Christ for condescending to do this. He was not only favoured with a sight of Christ, but was admitted into fellowship and communion with him. Great princes are willing to be *seen* by those whom yet they will not vouchsafe to *talk with*. But Christ, by his word and Spirit, talks with those whose desires are towards him, and in talking with them manifests himself to them, as he did to the two disciples, when he talked their hearts warm, Luke xxiv. 32. Observe, This poor man was solicitously enquiring after the Saviour, when at the same time he saw him, and was talking with him. Note, Jesus Christ is often nearer the souls that seek him than they themselves are aware of. Doubting Christians are sometimes saying, *Where is the Lord?* and fearing that they are cast out from his sight when at the same time it is he that *talks with them*, and *puts strength into them*.

4. The poor man readily entertains this surprising revelation, and, in a transport of joy and wonder, he said, *Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him*. (1.) He professed his faith in Christ: *Lord, I believe thee to be the Son of God*. He would not dispute any thing that he said who had shown such mercy to him, and wrought such a miracle for him, nor doubt of the truth of a doctrine which was confirmed by such signs. Believing with the heart, he thus confesses with the mouth; and now the bruised reed was become a cedar. (2.) He paid his homage to him: *He worshipped him*, not only gave him the civil respect due to a great man, and the acknowledgments owing to a kind benefactor but herein gave him divine honour, and worshipped him as the *Son of God* manifested in the flesh. None but God is to be worshipped; so that in worshipping Jesus he owned him to be God. Note, True faith will show itself in a humble adoration of the Lord Jesus. Those who believe in him will see all the reason in the world to worship him. We never read any more of this man; but, it is very likely, from henceforth he became a constant follower of Christ.

39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind



And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? 41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Christ, having spoken comfort to the poor man that was persecuted, here speaks conviction to his persecutors, a specimen of the distributions of trouble and rest at the great day, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. Probably this was not immediately after his discourse with the man, but he took the next opportunity that offered itself to address the Pharisees. Here is,

I. The account Christ gives of his design in coming into the world (v. 39): *For judgment I am come to order and administer the great affairs of the kingdom of God among men, and am invested with a judicial power in order thereunto, to be executed in conformity to the wise counsels of God, and in pursuance of them.* What Christ spoke, he spoke not as a preacher in the pulpit, but as a king upon the throne, and a judge upon the bench.

1. His business into the world was *great*; he came to keep the assizes and general gaol-delivery. He came *for judgment*, that is, (1.) To preach a doctrine and a law which would try men, and effectually discover and distinguish them, and would be completely fitted, in all respects, to be the rule of government now and of judgment shortly. (2.) To put a difference between men, by revealing the thoughts of many hearts, and laying open men's true characters, by this one test, whether they were well or ill affected to him. (3.) To change the face of government in his church, to abolish the Jewish economy, to take down that fabric, which, though erected for the time by the hand of God himself, yet by lapse of time was antiquated, and by the incurable corruptions of the managers of it was become rotten and dangerous, and to erect a new building by another model, to institute new ordinances and offices, to abrogate Judaism and enact Christianity; for this judgment he came into the world, and it was a great revolution.

2. This great truth he explains by a metaphor borrowed from the miracle which he had lately wrought. That *those who see not might see, and that those who see might be made blind*. Such a difference of Christ's coming is often spoken of; to some his gospel is a *savour of life unto life*, to others of *death unto death*. (1.) This is applicable to nations and people, that the Gentiles, who had long been destitute of the light of divine revelation, might see it; and the Jews, who had long enjoyed it, might have the things of their peace hid from their eyes, Hos. i. 10; ii. 23. The Gentiles see a great light, while blindness is *happened unto Israel*, and their eyes are *darkened*. (2.) To particular per-

sons. Christ came into the world, [1.] Intentionally and designedly to give sight to those that were spiritually blind; by his word to reveal the object, and by his Spirit to heal the organ, that many precious souls might be turned *from darkness to light*. He came *for judgment*, that is, to set those at liberty from their dark prison that were willing to be released, Isa. lxi. 1. [2.] Eventually, and in the issue, *that those who see might be made blind*; that those who have a high conceit of their own wisdom, and set up that in contradiction to divine revelation, might be sealed up in ignorance and infidelity. The preaching of the cross was foolishness, and an infatuating thing, to those who by wisdom *knew not God*. Christ came *into the world for this judgment*, to administer the affairs of a spiritual kingdom, seated in men's minds. Whereas, in the Jewish church, the blessings and judgments of God's government were mostly temporal, now the method of administration should be changed; and as the good subjects of his kingdom should be blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly things, such as arise from a due illumination of the mind, so the rebels should be punished with spiritual plagues, not war, famine, and pestilence, as formerly, but such as arise from a *judicial infatuation*, hardness of heart, terror of conscience, strong delusions, vile affections. In this way Christ will *judge between cattle and cattle*, Ezek. xxxiv. 17, 22.

II. The Pharisees' cavil at this. They were *with him*, not desirous to learn any good from him, but to form evil against him; and they said, *Are we blind also?* When Christ said that *those who saw* should by his coming be made blind, they apprehended that he meant them, who were the *seers* of the people, and valued themselves on their *insight* and *foresight*. "Now," say they, "we know that the common people are blind; but *are we blind also?* What we? The rabbins, the doctors, the learned in the laws, the graduates in the schools, *are we blind too?*" This is *scandalum magnatum*—a libel on the great. Note, Frequently those that need reproof most, and deserve it best, though they have wit enough to discern a *tacit* one, have not grace enough to bear a *just* one. These Pharisees took this reproof for a reproach, as those lawyers (Luke xi. 45): "*Are we blind also?* Darest thou say that we are blind, whose judgment every one has such a veneration for, values, and yields to?" Note, Nothing fortifies men's corrupt hearts more against the convictions of the word, nor more effectually repels them, than the good opinion, especially if it be a high opinion, which others have of them; as if all that had gained applause with men must needs obtain acceptance with God, than which nothing is more false and deceitful, for God sees not as man sees.

III. Christ's answer to this cavil, which, if it did not convince them, yet silenced them: *If you were blind you should have no sin; but*

now you say, *We see, therefore your sin remaineth.* They gloried that they were not blind, as the common people, were not so credulous and manageable as they, but would see with their own eyes, having abilities, as they thought, sufficient for their own guidance, so that they needed not any body to lead them. This very thing which they gloried in, Christ here tells them, was their shame and ruin. For,

1. *If you were blind, you would have no sin.*

(1.) "If you had been really ignorant, your sin had not been so deeply aggravated, nor would you have had so much sin to answer for as now you have. If you were blind, as the poor Gentiles are, and many of your own poor subjects, from whom you have taken the key of knowledge, you would have had comparatively *no sin.*" The times of ignorance God winked at; invincible ignorance, though it does not justify sin, excuses it, and lessens the guilt. It will be more tolerable with those that perish for lack of vision than with those that rebel against the light. (2.) "If you had been sensible of your own blindness, if when you would see nothing else you could have seen the need of one to lead you, you would soon have accepted Christ as your guide, and then you would have had no sin, you would have submitted to an evangelical righteousness, and have been put into a justified state." Note, Those that are convinced of their disease are in a fair way to be cured, for there is not a greater hindrance to the salvation of souls than self-sufficiency.

2. "*But now you say, We see; now that you have knowledge, and are instructed out of the law, your sin is highly aggravated; and now that you have a conceit of that knowledge, and think you see your way better than any body can show it you, therefore your sin remains, your case is desperate, and your disease incurable.*" And as those are most blind who will not see, so their blindness is most dangerous who fancy they do see. No patients are so hardly managed as those in a frenzy who say that they are well, and nothing ails them. The sin of those who are self-conceited and self-confident remains, for they reject the gospel of grace, and therefore the guilt of their sin remains unpardoned; and they forfeit the Spirit of grace, and therefore the power of their sin remains unbroken. Seest thou a wise man in his own conceit? Hearest thou the Pharisees say, *We see?* There is more hope of a fool, of a publican and a harlot, than of such.

#### CHAP. X.

In this chapter we have, I. Christ's parabolical discourse concerning himself as the door of the sheepfold, and the shepherd of the sheep, ver. 1—18. II. The various sentiments of people upon it, ver. 19—21. III. The dispute Christ had with the Jews in the temple at the feast of dedication, ver. 22—39. IV. His departure into the country thereupon, ver. 40—42.

**V**ERILY, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a

thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. 6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. 7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. 11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.



It is not certain whether this discourse was at the *feast of dedication* in the winter (spoken of v. 22), which may be taken as the date, not only of what follows, but of what goes before (that which countenances this is, that Christ, in his discourse there, carries on the metaphor of the sheep (v. 26, 27), whence it seems that that discourse and this were at the same time); or whether this was a continuation of his parley with the Pharisees, in the close of the foregoing chapter. The Pharisees supported themselves in their opposition to Christ with this principle, that they were the *pastors of the church*, and that Jesus, having no commission from them, was an intruder and an impostor, and therefore the people were bound in duty to stick to *them*, against *him*. In opposition to this, Christ here describes who were the false shepherds, and who the true, leaving them to infer what they were.

1. Here is the parable or similitude proposed (v. 1—5); it is borrowed from the custom of that country, in the management of their sheep. Similitudes, used for the illustration of divine truths, should be taken from those things that are most familiar and common, that the things of God be not clouded by that which should clear them. The preface to this discourse is solemn: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, —Amen, amen.* This vehement asseveration intimates the certainty and weight of what he said; we find *amen* doubled in the church's praises and prayers, Ps. xli. 13; lxxii. 19; lxxxix. 52. If we would have our *amens* accepted in heaven, let Christ's *amens* be prevailing on earth; his repeated *amens*.

1. In the parable we have, (1.) The evidence of a thief and a robber, that comes to do mischief to the flock, and damage to the owner, v. 1. *He enters not by the door*, as having no lawful cause of entry, but *climbs up some other way*, at a window, or some breach in the wall. How industrious are wicked people to do mischief! What plots will they lay, what pains will they take, what hazards will they run, in their wicked pursuits! This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of God. (2.) The character that distinguishes the rightful owner, who has a property in the sheep, and a care for them: *He enters in by the door*, as one having authority (v. 2), and he comes to do them some good office or other, to *bind up that which is broken*, and *strengthen that which is sick*, Ezek. xxxiv. 16. Sheep need man's care, and, in return for it, are serviceable to man (1 Cor. ix. 7); they clothe and feed those by whom they are coted and fed. (3.) The ready entrance that the shepherd finds: *To him the porter openeth*, v. 3. Anciently they had their sheepfolds within the outer gates of their houses, for the greater safety of their flocks, so that none could come to them the right way, but such as the porter opened to or the master of the house gave the keys to. (4.) The care he

takes and the provision he makes for his sheep. The *sheep hear his voice*, when he speaks familiarly to them, when they come into the fold, as men now do to their dogs and horses; and, which is more, he *calls his own sheep by name*, so exact is the notice he takes of them, the account he keeps of them; and he leads them out from the fold to the green pastures; and (v. 4, 5) when he *turns them out* to graze he does not drive them, but (such was the custom in those times) he goes before them, to prevent any mischief or danger that might meet them, and they, being used to it, *follow him*, and are safe. (5.) The strange attendance of the sheep upon the shepherd: *They know his voice*, so as to discern his mind by it, and to distinguish it from that of a stranger (for *the ox knows his owner*, Isa. i. 3), and *a stranger will they not follow*, but, as suspecting some ill design, will flee from him, not *knowing his voice*, but that it is not the voice of their own shepherd. This is the parable; we have the key to it, Ezek. xxxiv. 31: *You my flock are men, and I am your God.*

2. Let us observe from this parable, (1.) That good men are fitly compared to sheep. Men, as creatures depending on their Creator, are called the *sheep of his pasture*. Good men, as new creatures, have the good qualities of sheep; *harmless* and inoffensive as sheep; *meek* and quiet, without noise; *patient* as sheep under the hand both of the shearer and of the butcher; *useful* and profitable, tame and tractable, to the shepherd, and *sociable* one with another, and much used in sacrifices. (2.) The church of God in the world is a *sheepfold*, into which the *children of God* that were scattered abroad are *gathered together* (ch. xi. 52), and in which they are united and incorporated; it is a good fold, Ezek. xxxiv. 14. See Mic. ii. 12. This fold is well fortified, for God himself is as a *wall of fire* about it, Zech. ii. 5. (3.) This sheepfold lies much exposed to thieves and robbers; crafty seducers that debauch and deceive, and cruel persecutors that destroy and devour; *grievous wolves* (Acts xx. 29); thieves that would steal Christ's sheep from him, to sacrifice them to devils, or steal their food from them, that they might perish for lack of it; *wolves* in sheep's clothing, Matt. vii. 15. (4.) The great Shepherd of the sheep takes wonderful care of the flock and of all that belong to it. God is the great Shepherd, Ps. xxiii. 1; lxxx. 1. He knows those that are his, calls them by name, marks them for himself, leads them out to fat pastures, makes them both feed and rest there, speaks comfortably to them, guards them by his providence, guides them by his Spirit and word, and goes before them, to *set them in the way of his steps*. (5.) The under-shepherds, who are entrusted to feed the flock of God, ought to be careful and faithful in the discharge of that trust; magistrates must defend them, and protect and advance all their secular



interests; ministers must serve them in their spiritual interests, must *feed their souls* with the word of God faithfully opened and applied, and with gospel ordinances duly administered, *taking the oversight of them*. They must *enter by the door* of a regular ordination, and to such *the porter will open*; the Spirit of Christ will *set before them an open door*, give them authority in the church, and assurance in their own bosoms. They must know the members of their flocks by name, and watch over them; must lead them into the pastures of public ordinances, preside among them, be their mouth to God and God's to them; and in their conversation must be examples to the believers. (6.) Those who are truly the sheep of Christ will be very observant of their Shepherd, and very cautious and shy of strangers. [1.] *They follow their Shepherd*, for they *know his voice*, having both a discerning ear, and an obedient heart. [2.] *They flee from a stranger*, and dread following him, because they know not his voice. It is dangerous following those in whom we discern not the *voice of Christ*, and who would draw us from *faith in him* to *fancies concerning him*. And those who have experienced the power and efficacy of divine truths upon their souls, and have the savour and relish of them, have a wonderful sagacity to discover Satan's wiles, and to discern between good and evil.

II. The Jews' ignorance of the drift and meaning of this discourse (v. 6): *Jesus spoke this parable* to them, this figurative, but wise, elegant, and instructive discourse, *but they understood not what the things were which he spoke unto them*, were not aware whom he meant by the *thieves and robbers* and whom by the *good Shepherd*. It is the sin and shame of many who hear the word of Christ that they do not understand it, and they do not because they will not, and because they will *mis-understand it*. They have no acquaintance with, nor taste of, the things themselves, and therefore do not understand the parables and comparisons with which they are illustrated. The Pharisees had a great conceit of their own knowledge, and could not bear that it should be questioned, and yet they had not sense enough to *understand the things that Jesus spoke of*; they were above their capacity. Frequently the greatest pretenders to knowledge are most ignorant in the things of God.

III. Christ's explication of this parable, opening the particulars of it fully. Whatever difficulties there may be in the sayings of the Lord Jesus, we shall find him ready to explain himself, if we be but willing to understand him. We shall find one scripture expounding another, and the *blessed Spirit* interpreter to the *blessed Jesus*. Christ, in the parable, had distinguished the shepherd from the robber by this, that he *enters in by the door*. Now, in the explication of the parable, he makes himself to be both *the door*

by which the shepherd enters and the shepherd that enters in by the door. Though it may be a solecism in rhetoric to make the same person to be both *the door* and the *shepherd*, it is no solecism in divinity to make Christ to have his authority from himself, as he has life in himself; and *himself to enter by his own blood*, as the door, *into the holy place*.

1. Christ is *the door*. This he saith to those who pretended to *seek for righteousness*, but, like the Sodomites, *wearied themselves to find the door*, where it was not to be found. He saith it to the Jews, who would be thought God's only sheep, and to the Pharisees, who would be thought their only shepherds: *I am the door* of the sheepfold; the door of the church.

(1.) In general, [1.] He is as a *door shut*, to keep out thieves and robbers, and such as are not fit to be admitted. The shutting of the door is the securing of the house; and what greater security has the church of God than the interposal of the Lord Jesus, and his wisdom, power, and goodness, betwixt it and all its enemies? [2.] He is as a *door open* for passage and communication. *First*, By Christ, as the door, we have our first admission into the flock of God, *ch. xiv. 6*. *Secondly*, We go in and out in a religious conversation, assisted by him, accepted in him; walking up and down in his name, *Zech. x. 12*. *Thirdly*, By him God comes to his church, visits it, and communicates himself to it. *Fourthly*, By him, as the door, the sheep are at last admitted into the heavenly kingdom, *Matt. xxv. 34*.

(2.) More particularly,

[1.] Christ is the door of *the shepherds*, so that none who come not in by him are to be accounted *pastors*, but (according to the rule laid down, v. 1) *thieves and robbers* (though they pretended to be *shepherds*); but the *sheep did not hear them*. This refers to all those that had the character of shepherds in *Israel*, whether magistrates or ministers, that exercised their office without any regard to the Messiah, or any other expectations of him than what were suggested by their own carnal interest. Observe, *First*, The character given of them: they are *thieves and robbers* (v. 8); all that *went before him*, not in time, many of them were faithful shepherds, but all that *anticipated* his commission, and went before he sent them (*Jer. xxiii. 21*), that assumed a precedency and superiority above him, as the antichrist is said to *exalt himself*, *2 Thess. ii. 4*. "The scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests, *all, even as many as have come before me*; that have endeavoured to forestall my interest, and to prevent my gaining any room in the minds of people, by prepossessing them with prejudices against me, they are *thieves and robbers*, and steal those hearts which they have no title to, defrauding the right owner of his property." They condemned our Saviour as a thief and a robber,



because he did not come in by them as the door, nor take out a license from them; but he shows that they ought to have received their commission from him, to have been admitted by him, and to have come after him, and because they did not, but stepped before him, they were *thieves and robbers*. They would not come in as his disciples, and therefore were condemned as usurpers, and their pretended commissions vacated and superseded. Note, Rivals with Christ are robbers of his church, however they pretend to be *shepherds*, nay, *shepherds of shepherds*. Secondly, The care taken to preserve the sheep from them: *But the sheep did not hear them*. Those that had a true savour of piety, that were spiritual and heavenly, and sincerely devoted to God and godliness, could by no means approve of the traditions of the elders, nor relish their formalities. Christ's disciples, without any particular instructions from their Master, made no conscience of eating with unwashen hands, or plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day; for nothing is more opposite to true Christianity than Pharisaism is, nor anything more disrelishing to a soul truly devout than their hypocritical devotions.

[2.] Christ is the door of the sheep (v. 9): *By me (δι' ἐμοῦ—through me as the door) if any man enter into the sheepfold, as one of the flock, he shall be saved; shall not only be safe from thieves and robbers, but he shall be happy, he shall go in and out*. Here are, *First*, Plain directions how to come into the fold: we must come in *by Jesus Christ* as the door. By faith in him, as the great Mediator between God and man, we come into covenant and communion with God. There is no entering into God's church but by coming into Christ's church; nor are any looked upon as members of the kingdom of God among men but those that are willing to submit to the grace and government of the Redeemer. We must now enter by the *door of faith* (Acts xiv. 27), since the door of *innocency* is shut against us, and that *pass* become unpassable, Gen. iii. 24. *Secondly*, Precious promises to those who observe this direction. 1. *They shall be saved hereafter*; this is the privilege of *their home*. These sheep shall be saved from being distrained and impounded by divine justice for trespass done, satisfaction being made for the damage by their great Shepherd, saved from being a prey to the roaring lion; they shall be *for ever happy*. 2. In the mean time they shall *go in and out and find pasture*; this is the privilege of *their way*. They shall have their conversation in the world by the grace of Christ, shall be in his fold as a man at his own house, where he has *free ingress, egress, and regress*. True believers are *at home* in Christ; when they go out, they are not *shut out* as strangers, but have liberty to come in again; when they come in, they are not *shut in* as trespassers, but have liberty to go out.

They go out to the field in the morning, they come into the fold at night; and in both the Shepherd leads and keeps them, and they *find pasture* in both: grass in the field, fodder in the fold. In public, in private, they have the word of God to converse with, by which their spiritual life is supported and nourished, and out of which their gracious desires are satisfied; they are replenished with the goodness of God's house.

2. Christ is the *shepherd*, v. 11, &c. He was prophesied of under the Old Testament as a *shepherd*, Isa. xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; xxxvii. 24; Zech. xiii. 7. In the New Testament he is spoken of as the *great Shepherd* (Heb. xiii. 20), the *chief Shepherd* (1 v. 4), the *Shepherd and bishop of our souls*, 1 Pet. ii. 25. God, our great owner, the sheep of whose pasture we are by creation, has constituted his Son Jesus to be our *shepherd*; and here again and again he owns the relation. He has all that care of his church, and every believer, that a good shepherd has of his flock; and expects all that attendance and observance from the church, and every believer, which the shepherds in those countries had from their flocks.

(1.) Christ is a *shepherd*, and not as the thief, not as those that *came not in by the door*. Observe,

[1.] The mischievous design of the thief (v. 10): *The thief cometh not with any good intent, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*. *First*, Those whom they *steal*, whose hearts and affections they steal from Christ and his pastures, they *kill and destroy* spiritually; for the *heresies* they *privily bring in* are *dammable*. Deceivers of souls are murderers of souls. Those that steal away the scripture by keeping it in an unknown tongue, that steal away the sacraments by maiming them and altering the property of them, that steal away Christ's ordinances to put their own inventions in the room of them, they *kill and destroy*: ignorance and idolatry are destructive things. *Secondly*, Those whom they cannot *steal*, whom they can neither lead, drive, nor carry away, from the flock of Christ, they aim by persecutions and massacres to *kill and destroy* corporally. He that will not suffer himself to be robbed is in danger of being slain.

[2.] The gracious design of the shepherd; he is come,

*First*, *To give life to the sheep*. In opposition to the design of the thief, which is to *kill and destroy* (which was the design of the scribes and Pharisees) Christ saith, *I am come among men*, 1. That they might *have life*. He came to put life into the flock, the church in general, which had seemed rather like a valley full of dry bones than like a pasture covered over with flocks. Christ came to vindicate divine truths, to purify divine ordinances, to redress grievances, and to revive dying zeal, to seek those of his flock that were *lost*, to *bind up that which was broken* (Ezek



xxxiv. 16), and this to his *cauren* is as *life from the dead*. He came to *give life* to particular believers. Life is inclusive of all good, and stands in opposition to the death threatened (Gen. ii. 17); that *we might have life*, as a criminal has when he is pardoned, as a sick man when he is cured, a dead man when he is raised; that we might be justified, sanctified, and at last glorified. 2. That they might have it *more abundantly*, *καὶ περισσὸν ἔχωσιν*. As we read it, it is *comparative*, that they might have a life *more abundant* than that which was lost and forfeited by sin, more abundant than that which was promised by the law of Moses, length of days in Canaan, more abundant than could have been expected or than we are *able to ask or think*. But it may be construed without a note of comparison, *that they might have abundance*, or might have it *abundantly*. Christ came to give life and *περισσὸν τι*—*something more*, something *better*, life with advantage; that in Christ we might not only live, but live comfortably, live plentifully, live and rejoice. Life in abundance is *eternal life*, life without death or fear of death, life and *much more*.

*Secondly*, To *give his life for the sheep*, and this that he might give life to them (v. 11): *The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*. 1. It is the property of every good shepherd to hazard and expose his life for the sheep. Jacob did so, when he would go through such a fatigue to attend them, Gen. xxxi. 40. So did David, when he *slew the lion and the bear*. Such a shepherd of souls was St. Paul, who would gladly *spend, and be spent*, for their service, and *counted not his life dear to him*, in comparison with their salvation. But, 2. It was the prerogative of the great Shepherd to give his life to purchase his flock (Acts xx. 28), to satisfy for their trespass, and to shed his blood to wash and cleanse them.

(2.) Christ is a *good shepherd*, and not as a hireling. There were many that were not thieves, aiming to kill and destroy the sheep, but passed for shepherds, yet were very careless in the discharge of their duty, and through their neglect the flock was greatly damaged; *foolish shepherds, idle shepherds*, Zech. xi. 15, 17. In opposition to these,

[1.] Christ here *calls himself the good shepherd* (v. 11), and again (v. 14) *ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός*—*that Shepherd, that good Shepherd*, whom God had promised. Note, Jesus Christ is the best of shepherds, the best in the world to take the over-sight of souls, none so skilful, so faithful, so tender, as he, no such feeder and leader, no such protector and healer of souls as he.

[2.] He *proves himself* so, in opposition to all hirelings, v. 12—14. Where observe,

*First*, The carelessness of the unfaithful shepherd described (v. 12, 13); he that is a hireling, that is employed as a servant and is paid for his pains, *whose own the sheep are not*, who has neither profit nor loss by them, *sees the wolf coming*, or some other danger

threatening, and *leaves the sheep to the wolf*, for in truth he *careth not for them*. Here is plain reference to that of the idol-shepherd, Zech. xi. 17. Evil shepherds, magistrates and ministers, are here described both by their bad principles and their bad practices.

*a. Their bad principles*, the root of their bad practices. What makes those that have the charge of souls in trying times to betray their trust, and in quiet times not to mind it? What makes them false, and trifling, and self-seeking? It is because they are *hirelings*, and *care not for the sheep*. That is, (a.) The wealth of the world is the chief of their good; it is because they are *hirelings*. They undertook the shepherds' office, as a trade to live and grow rich by, not as an opportunity of serving Christ and doing good. It is the love of money, and of their own bellies, that carries them on in it. Not that those are hirelings who, while they *serve at the altar, live*, and live comfortably, *upon the altar*. The labourer is worthy of his meat; and a scandalous maintenance will soon make a scandalous ministry. But those are *hirelings* that love the wages more than the work, and *set their hearts* upon that, as the hireling is said to do, Deut. xxiv. 15. See 1 Sam. ii. 29; Isa. lvi. 11; Mic. iii. 5, 11. (b.) The work of their place is the least of their care. They *value not the sheep*, are unconcerned in the souls of others; their business is to be their brothers' lords, not their brothers' keepers or helpers; they *seek their own things*, and do not, like Timothy, *naturally care for the state of souls*. What can be expected but that they will flee when the *wolf comes*. He *careth not for the sheep*, for he is one *whose own the sheep are not*. In one respect we may say of the best of the under-shepherds that the sheep are *not their own*, they have not dominion over them nor property in them (*feed my sheep and my lambs*, saith Christ); but in respect of dearness and affection they should be *their own*. Paul looked upon those as *his own* whom he called his *dearly beloved and longed for*. Those who do not cordially espouse the church's interests, and make them their own, will not long be faithful to them.

*b. Their bad practices*, the effect of these bad principles, v. 12. See here, (a.) How basely the hireling deserts his post; when he sees *the wolf coming*, though then there is most need of him, he *leaves the sheep and flees*. Note, Those who mind their safety more than their duty are an easy prey to Satan's temptations. (b.) How fatal the consequences are! the hireling fancies the sheep may look to themselves, but it does not prove so: *the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep*, which will all be charged upon the treacherous shepherd. The blood of perishing souls is required at the hand of the careless watchmen.

*Secondly*, See here the grace and tender-



ness of the good Shepherd set over against the former, as it was in the prophecy (Ezek. xxxiv. 21, 22, &c.): *I am the good Shepherd*. It is matter of comfort to the church, and all her friends, that, however she may be damaged and endangered by the treachery and mismanagement of her under-officers, the Lord Jesus is, and will be, as he ever has been, *the good Shepherd*. Here are two great instances of the shepherd's goodness.

a. His *acquainting* himself with his flock, with all that belong or in any wise appertain to his flock, which are of two sorts, both known to him:—

(a.) He is acquainted with all that *are now of his flock* (v. 14, 15), as the good Shepherd (v. 3, 4): *I know my sheep and am known of mine*. Note, There is a mutual acquaintance between Christ and true believers; they know one another very well, and knowledge notes affection.

[a.] Christ *knows his sheep*. He knows with a *distinguishing eye* who are his sheep, and who are not; he knows the sheep under their many infirmities, and the goats under their most plausible disguises. He knows with a *favourable eye* those that in truth are his own sheep; he takes cognizance of their state, concerns himself for them, has a tender and affectionate regard to them, and is continually mindful of them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the veil; he visits them graciously by his Spirit, and has communion with them; he *knows* them, that is, he approves and accepts of them, as Ps. i. 6; xxxvii. 18; Exod. xxxiii. 17.

[b.] He is *known of them*. He observes them with an eye of favour, and they observe him with an eye of faith. Christ's knowing his sheep is put before their knowing him, for he knew and loved us first (1 John iv. 19), and it is not so much our knowing him as our being known of him that is our happiness, Gal. iv. 9. Yet it is the character of Christ's sheep that *they know him*; know him from all pretenders and intruders; they know his mind, know his voice, know by experience the power of his death. Christ speaks here as if he gloried in being known by his sheep, and thought their respect an honour to him. Upon this occasion Christ mentions (v. 15) the mutual acquaintance between his Father and himself: *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father*. Now this may be considered, either, *First*, As the *ground* of that intimate acquaintance and relation which subsist between Christ and believers. The covenant of grace, which is the bond of this relation, is founded in the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, which, we may be sure, stands firm; for the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter, and there could be no mistake, which might leave the matter at any uncertainty, or bring it into any hazard. The Lord Jesus *knows whom he hath chosen*, and is sure of them (ch. xiii. 18), and they also *know whom they have trusted*, and are

sure of him (2 Tim. i. 12), and the ground of both is the perfect knowledge which the Father and the Son had of one another's mind, when the *counsel of peace was between them both*. Or, *Secondly*, As an apt similitude, illustrating the intimacy that is between Christ and believers. It may be connected with the foregoing words, thus: *I know my sheep, and am known of mine, even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father*; compare ch. xvii. 21. 1. As the Father knew the Son, and loved him, and owned him in his sufferings, when he was *led as a sheep to the slaughter*, so Christ knows his sheep, and has a watchful tender eye upon them, will be with them when they are *left alone*, as his Father was with him. 2. As the Son knew the Father, loved and obeyed him, and always did those things that pleased him, confiding in him as his God even when he seemed to forsake him, so believers know Christ with an obediential fiducial regard.

(b.) He is acquainted with those that are *hereafter to be of this flock* (v. 16): *Other sheep I have*, have a right to and an interest in, *which are not of this fold*, of the Jewish church; *them also I must bring*. Observe,

[a.] The eye that Christ had to the poor Gentiles. He had sometimes intimated his special concern for the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*; to them indeed his personal ministry was confined; but, saith he, *I have other sheep*. Those who in process of time should believe in Christ, and be brought into obedience to him from among the Gentiles, are here called *sheep*, and he is said to have them, though as yet they were *uncalled*, and many of them *unborn*, because they were chosen of God, and given to Christ in the counsels of divine love from eternity. Christ has a right, by virtue of the Father's donation and his own purchase, to many a soul of which he has not yet the possession; thus he had *much people* in Corinth, when as yet it lay in wickedness, Acts xviii. 10. "Those other sheep *I have*," saith Christ, "I have them on my heart, have them in my eye, am as sure to have them as if I had them already." Now Christ speaks of those *other sheep*. *First*, To take off the contempt that was put upon him, as having *few followers*, as having but a *little flock*, and therefore, if a *good shepherd*, yet a *poor shepherd*: "But," saith he, "I have more sheep than you see." *Secondly*, To take down the pride and vain-glory of the Jews, who thought the Messiah must gather all his sheep from among them. "No," saith Christ, "I have others whom I will set with the lambs of my flock, though you disdain to set them with the dogs of your flock."

[b.] The purposes and resolves of his grace concerning them: "*Them also I must bring*, bring home to God, bring into the church, and, in order to this, bring off from their vain conversation, bring them back from their wanderings, as that *lost sheep*," Luke xv. 5. But why *must* he bring them?



What was the necessity? *First*, The necessity of their case required it: "I must bring, or they must be left to wander endlessly, for, like sheep, they will never come back of themselves, and no other can or will bring them." *Secondly*, The necessity of his own engagements required it; he must bring them, or he would not be faithful to his trust, and true to his undertaking. "They are my own, bought and paid for, and therefore I must not neglect them nor leave them to perish." He must in honour bring those with whom he was entrusted.

[c.] The happy effect and consequence of this, in two things:—*First*, "They shall hear my voice. Not only my voice shall be heard among them (whereas they have not heard, and therefore could not believe, now the sound of the gospel shall go to the ends of the earth), but it shall be heard by them; I will speak, and give to them to hear." Faith comes by hearing, and our diligent observance of the voice of Christ is both a means and an evidence of our being brought to Christ, and to God by him. *Secondly*, There shall be one fold and one shepherd. As there is one shepherd, so there shall be one fold. Both Jews and Gentiles, upon their turning to the faith of Christ, shall be incorporated in one church, be joint and equal sharers in the privileges of it, without distinction. Being united to Christ, they shall unite in him; two sticks shall become one in the hand of the Lord. Note, One shepherd makes one fold; one Christ makes one church. As the church is one in its constitution, subject to one head, animated by one Spirit, and guided by one rule, so the members of it ought to be one in love and affection, Eph. iv. 3—6.

b. Christ's offering up himself for his sheep is another proof of his being a good shepherd, and in this he yet more commended his love, v. 15, 17, 18.

(a.) He declares his purpose of dying for his flock (v. 15): *I lay down my life for the sheep*. He not only ventured his life for them (in such a case, the hope of saving it might balance the fear of losing it), but he actually deposited it, and submitted to a necessity of dying for our redemption; τίθημι—I put it as a pawn or pledge; as purchase-money paid down. Sheep appointed for the slaughter, ready to be sacrificed, were ransomed with the blood of the shepherd. He laid down his life, ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων, not only for the good of the sheep, but in their stead. Thousands of sheep had been offered in sacrifice for their shepherds, as sin-offerings, but here, by a surprising reverse, the shepherd is sacrificed for the sheep. When David, the shepherd of Israel, was himself guilty, and the destroying angel drew his sword against the flock for his sake, with good reason did he plead, *These sheep, what evil have they done? Let thy hand be against me*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. But the Son of David was

sinless and spotless; and his sheep, what evil have they not done? Yet he saith, *Let thine hand be against me*. Christ here seems to refer to that prophecy, Zech. xiii. 7, *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd*; and, though the smiting of the shepherd be for the present the scattering of the flock, it is in order to the gathering of them in.

(b.) He takes off the offence of the cross, which to many is a stone of stumbling, by four considerations:—

[a.] That his laying down his life for the sheep was the condition, the performance of which entitled him to the honours and powers of his exalted state (v. 17): "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life. Upon these terms I am, as Mediator, to expect my Father's acceptance and approbation, and the glory designed me—that I become a sacrifice for the chosen remnant." Not but that, as the Son of God, he was beloved of his Father from eternity, but as God-man, as Immanuel, he was therefore beloved of the Father because he undertook to die for the sheep; therefore God's soul delighted in him as his elect because herein he was his faithful servant (Isa. xlii. 1); therefore he said, *This is my beloved Son*. What an instance is this of God's love to man, that he loved his Son the more for loving us! See what a value Christ puts upon his Father's love, that, to recommend himself to that, he would lay down his life for the sheep. Did he think God's love recompence sufficient for all his services and sufferings, and shall we think it too little for ours, and court the smiles of the world to make it up? *Therefore doth my Father love me*, that is, me, and all that by faith become one with me; me, and the mystical body, because I lay down my life.

[b.] That his laying down his life was in order to his resuming it: *I lay down my life, that I may receive it again*. *First*, This was the effect of his Father's love, and the first step of his exaltation, the fruit of that love. Because he was God's holy one, he must not see corruption, Ps. xvi. 10. God loved him too well to leave him in the grave. *Secondly*, This he had in his eye, in laying down his life, that he might have an opportunity of declaring himself to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection, Rom. i. 4. By a divine stratagem (like that before Ai, Josh. viii. 15) he yielded to death, as if he were smitten before it, that he might the more gloriously conquer death, and triumph over the grave. He laid down a vilified body, that he might assume a glorified one, fit to ascend to the world of spirits; laid down a life adapted to this world, but assumed one adapted to the other, like a corn of wheat, ch. xii. 24.

[c.] That he was perfectly voluntary in his sufferings and death (v. 18): "No one doth or can force my life from me against my will, but I freely lay it down of myself; I deliver it as my own act and deed, for I have (which no



man has) power to lay it down, and to take it again."

1st, See here the power of Christ, as the Lord of life, particularly of his own life, which he had in himself. 1. He had power to keep his life against all the world, so that it could not be wrested from him without his own consent. Though Christ's life seemed to be taken by storm, yet really it was surrendered, otherwise it had been impregnable, and never taken. The Lord Jesus did not fall into the hands of his persecutors because he could not avoid it, but threw himself into their hands because his hour was come. *No man taketh my life from me.* This was such a challenge as was never given by the most daring hero. 2. He had power to lay down his life. (1.) He had ability to do it. He could, when he pleased, slip the knot of union between soul and body, and, without any act of violence done to himself, could disengage them from each other: having voluntarily taken up a body, he could voluntarily lay it down again, which appeared when he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. (2.) He had authority to do it, *ἐξουσίαν*. Though we could find instruments of cruelty, wherewith to make an end of our own lives, yet *Id possumus quod jure possumus—we can do that, and that only, which we can do lawfully.* We are not at liberty to do it; but Christ had a sovereign authority to dispose of his own life as he pleased. He was no debtor (as we are) either to life or death, but perfectly *sui juris*. 3. He had power to take it again; we have not. Our life, once laid down, is as water spilt upon the ground; but Christ, when he laid down his life, still had it within reach, within call, and could resume it. Parting with it by a voluntary conveyance, he might limit the surrender at pleasure, and he did it with a power of revocation, which was necessary to preserve the intentions of the surrender.

2ndly, See here the grace of Christ; since none could demand his life of him by law, or extort it by force, he laid it down of himself for our redemption. He offered himself to be the Saviour: *Lo, I come*; and then, the necessity of our case calling for it, he offered himself to be a sacrifice: *Here am I, let these go their way; by which will we are sanctified*, Heb. x. 10. He was both the offerer and the offering, so that his laying down his life was his offering up himself.

[d.] That he did all this by the express order and appointment of his Father, into which he ultimately resolves the whole affair. *This commandment have I received of my Father*; not such a commandment as made what he did necessary, prior to his own voluntary undertaking; but this was the law of mediation, which he was willing to have written in his heart, so as to delight in doing the will of God according to it, Ps. xl. 8.

19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these say-

ings. 20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? 21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

We have here an account of the people's different sentiments concerning Christ, on occasion of the foregoing discourse; there was a division, a *schism*, among them; they differed in their opinions, which threw them into heats and parties. Such a ferment as this they had been in before (*ch. vii. 43; ix. 16*); and where there has once been a division a little thing will make a division again. Rents are sooner made than made up or mended. This division was occasioned by the sayings of Christ, which, one would think, should rather have united them all in him as their centre; but they set them at variance, as Christ foresaw, Luke xii. 51. But it is better that men should be divided about the doctrine of Christ than united in the service of sin, Luke xi. 21. See what the debate was in particular.

I. Some upon this occasion spoke ill of Christ and of his sayings, either openly in the face of the assembly, for his enemies were very impudent, or privately among themselves. They said, *He has a devil, and is mad, why do you hear him?* 1. They reproach him as a demoniac. The worst of characters is put upon the best of men. He is a distracted man, he raves and is delirious, and no more to be heard than the rambles of a man in bedlam. Thus still, if a man preaches seriously and pressingly of another world, he shall be said to talk like an enthusiast; and his conduct shall be imputed to fancy, a heated brain, and a crazed imagination. 2. They ridicule his hearers: "*Why hear you him?* Why do you so far encourage him as to take notice of what he says?" Note, Satan ruins many by putting them out of conceit with the word and ordinances, and representing it as a weak and silly thing to attend upon them. Men would not thus be laughed out of their necessary food, and yet suffer themselves to be laughed out of what is more necessary. Those that hear Christ, and mix faith with what they hear, will soon be able to give a good account why they hear him.

II. Others stood up in defence of him and his discourse, and, though the stream ran strong, dared to swim against it; and, though perhaps they did not believe on him as the Messiah, they could not bear to hear him thus abused. If they could say no more of him, this they would maintain, that he was a man in his wits, that he had not a devil, that he was neither senseless nor graceless. The absurd and most unreasonable reproaches, that have sometimes been cast upon Christ and his gospel, have excited those to appear for him and it who otherwise had no great affection to either. Two things they plead

—1. The excellency of his doctrine: "*These are not the words of him that hath a devil; they are not idle words; distracted men are not used to talk at this rate. These are not the words of one that is either violently possessed with a devil or voluntarily in league with the devil.*" Christianity, if it be not the true religion, is certainly the greatest cheat that ever was put upon the world; and, if so, it must be of the devil, who is the father of all lies; but it is certain that the doctrine of Christ is no doctrine of devils, for it is levelled directly against the devil's kingdom, and Satan is too subtle to be divided against himself. So much of holiness there is in the words of Christ that we may conclude they are *not the words of one that has a devil*, and therefore are the words of one that was sent of God; are not from hell, and therefore must be from heaven. 2. The power of his miracles: *Can a devil*, that is, a man that has a devil, *open the eyes of the blind?* Neither mad men nor bad men can work miracles. Devils are not such lords of the power of nature as to be able to work such miracles; nor are they such friends to mankind as to be willing to work them if they were able. The devil will sooner put out men's eyes than open them. Therefore Jesus *had not a devil*.

22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. 23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. 24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one. 31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? 33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou,

being a man, makest thyself God. 34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? 35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; 36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? 37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. 38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

We have here another rencounter between Christ and the Jews in the temple, in which it is hard to say which is more strange, the gracious words that came out of his mouth or the spiteful ones that came out of theirs.

I. We have here the time when this conference was: *It was at the feast of dedication, and it was winter*, a feast that was annually observed by consent, in remembrance of the dedication of a new altar and the purging of the temple, by Judas Maccabæus, after the temple had been profaned and the altar defiled; we have the story of it at large in the history of the Maccabees (*lib. 1, cap. iv.*); we have the prophecy of it, Dan. viii. 13, 14. See more of the feast, 2 Mac. i. 18. The return of their liberty was to them as life from the dead, and, in remembrance of it, they kept an annual feast on the twenty-fifth day of the month *Cisleu*, about the beginning of *December*, and seven days after. The celebrating of it was not confined to Jerusalem, as that of the divine feasts was, but every one observed it in his own place, not as a *holy time* (it is only a divine institution that can sanctify a day), but as a *good time*, as the days of Purim, Esth. ix. 19. Christ forecasted to be now at Jerusalem, not in honour of the feast, which did not require his attendance there, but that he might improve those eight days of vacation for good purposes.

II. The place where it was (*v. 23*): *Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch*; so called (Acts iii. 11), not because built by Solomon, but because built in the same place with that which had borne his name in the first temple, and the name was kept up for the greater reputation of it. Here Christ walked, to observe the proceedings of the great sanhedrim that sat here (Ps. lxxxii. 1); *he walked*, ready to give audience to any that should apply to him, and to offer them his services. He walked, as it should seem, for some time *alone*, as one neglected; walked pensive, in the foresight of the ruin of the temple. Those that have any thing to say to Christ may find him in the temple and walk with him there.



III. The conference itself, in which observe,

1. A weighty question put to him by the Jews, v. 24. *'They came round about him, to tease him; he was waiting for an opportunity to do them a kindness, and they took the opportunity to do him a mischief. Ill-will for good-will is no rare and uncommon return. He could not enjoy himself, no, not in the temple, his Father's house, without disturbance. They came about him, as it were, to lay siege to him: encompassed him about like bees. They came about him as if they had a joint and unanimous desire to be satisfied; came as one man, pretending an impartial and importunate enquiry after truth, but intending a general assault upon our Lord Jesus; and they seemed to speak the sense of their nation, as if they were the mouth of all the Jews: How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us.'*

(1.) They quarrel with him, as if he had unfairly held them in suspense hitherto. *Τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν αἰσῆς;—How long dost thou steal away our hearts? Or, take away our souls? So some read it; basely intimating that what share he had of the people's love and respect he did not obtain fairly, but by indirect methods, as Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel; and as seducers deceive the hearts of the simple, and so draw away disciples after them, Rom. xvi. 18; Acts xx. 30. But most interpreters understand it as we do: "How long dost thou keep us in suspense? How long are we kept debating whether thou be the Christ or no, and not able to determine the question?" Now, [1.] It was the effect of their infidelity, and powerful prejudices, that after our Lord Jesus had so fully proved himself to be the Christ they were still in doubt concerning it; this they willingly hesitated about, when they might easily have been satisfied. The struggle was between their convictions, which told them he was Christ, and their corruptions, which said, No, because he was not such a Christ as they expected. Those who choose to be sceptics may, if they please, hold the balance so that the most cogent arguments may not weigh down the most trifling objections, but the scales may still hang even. [2.] It was an instance of their impudence and presumption that they laid the blame of their doubting upon Christ himself, as if he made them to doubt by inconsistency with himself, whereas in truth they made themselves doubt by indulging their prejudices. If Wisdom's sayings appear doubtful, the fault is not in the object, but in the eye; they are all plain to him that understands. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves to doubt.*

(2.) They challenge him to give a direct and categorical answer whether he was the Messiah or no: *"If thou be the Christ, as many believe thou art, tell us plainly, not by parables, as, I am the light of the world, and*

*the good Shepherd, and the like, but totidem verbis—in so many words, either that thou art the Christ, or, as John Baptist, that thou art not," ch. i. 20. Now this pressing query of theirs was seemingly good; they pretended to be desirous to know the truth, as if they were ready to embrace it; but it was really bad, and put with an ill design; for, if he should tell them plainly that he was the Christ, there needed no more to make him obnoxious to the jealousy and severity of the Roman government. Every one knew the Messiah was to be a king, and therefore whoever pretended to be the Messiah would be prosecuted as a traitor, which was the thing they would have been at; for, let him tell them ever so plainly that he was the Christ, they would have this to say presently, *Thou bearest witness of thyself*, as they had said, ch. viii. 13.*

2. Christ's answer to this question, in which,

(1.) He justifies himself as not at all accessary to their infidelity and scepticism, referring them, [1.] To what he had said: *I have told you.* He had told them that he was the Son of God, the Son of man, that he had life in himself, that he had authority to execute judgment, &c. And is not this the Christ then? These things he had told them, and they believed not; why then should they be told them again, merely to gratify their curiosity? *You believed not.* They pretended that they only doubted, but Christ tells them that they did not believe. Scepticism in religion is no better than downright infidelity. It is not for us to teach God how he should teach us, nor prescribe to him how plainly he should tell us his mind, but to be thankful for divine revelation as we have it. If we do not believe this, neither should we be persuaded if it were ever so much adapted to our humour. [2.] He refers them to his works, to the example of his life, which was not only perfectly pure, but highly beneficent, and of a piece with his doctrine; and especially to his miracles, which he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine. It was certain that no man could do those miracles except God were with him, and God would not be with him to attest a forgery.

(2.) He condemns them for their obstinate unbelief, notwithstanding all the most plain and powerful arguments used to convince them: *"You believed not; and again, You believed not.* You still are what you always were, obstinate in your unbelief." But the reason he gives is very surprising: *"You believed not, because you are not of my sheep: you believe not in me, because you belong not to me."* [1.] "You are not disposed to be my followers, are not of a tractable teachable temper, have no inclination to receive the doctrine and law of the Messiah; you will not herd yourselves with my sheep, will not come and see, come and hear my voice." Rooted antipathies to the gospel of Christ are



the bonds of iniquity and infidelity. [2.] "You are not *designed* to be my followers; you are not of those that were given me by my Father, to be brought to grace and glory. You are not of the number of the elect; and your unbelief, if you persist in it, will be a certain evidence that you are not." Note, Those to whom God never gives the grace of faith were never designed for heaven and happiness. What Solomon saith of immortality is true of infidelity, *It is a deep ditch, and he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein*, Prov. xxii. 14. *Non esse electum, non est causa incredulitatis propriè dicta, sed causa per accidens. Fides autem est donum Dei et effectus prædestinationis—Then not being included among the elect is not the proper cause of infidelity, but merely the accidental cause. But faith is the gift of God, and the effect of predestination.* So Jansenius distinguishes well here.

(3.) He takes this occasion to describe both the gracious disposition and the happy state of those that are his sheep; for such there are, though they be not.

[1.] To convince them that they were not his sheep, he tells them what were the characters of his sheep. *First, They hear his voice* (v. 27), for they know it to be his (v. 4), and he has undertaken that they shall hear it, v. 16. They discern it, *It is the voice of my beloved*, Cant. ii. 8. They delight in it, are in their element when they are sitting at his feet to hear his word. They do according to it, and make his word their rule. Christ will not account those his sheep that are deaf to his calls, deaf to his charms, Ps. lviii. 5. *Secondly, They follow him*; they submit to his guidance by a willing obedience to all his commands, and a cheerful conformity to his spirit and pattern. The word of command has always been, *Follow me*. We must eye him as our leader and captain, and *tread in his steps*, and walk as he walked—follow the prescriptions of his word, the intimations of his providence, and the directions of his Spirit—*follow the Lamb* (the *dux gregis*—the leader of the flock) *whithersoever he goes*. In vain do we hear his voice if we do not follow him.

[2.] To convince them that it was their great unhappiness and misery not to be of Christ's sheep, he here describes the blessed state and case of those that are, which would likewise serve for the support and comfort of his poor despised followers, and keep them from envying the power and grandeur of those that were not of his sheep.

*First, Our Lord Jesus takes cognizance of his sheep: They hear my voice, and I know them.* He distinguishes them from others (2 Tim. ii. 19), has a particular regard to every individual (Ps. xxxiv. 6); he knows their wants and desires, knows their souls in adversity, where to find them, and what to do for them. He knows others afar off, but knows them near at hand.

*Secondly, He has provided a happiness for them, suited to them: I give unto them eternal life, v. 28.* 1. The estate settled upon them is rich and valuable; it is life, eternal life. Man has a living soul; therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature. Man has an immortal soul: therefore the happiness provided is eternal life, running parallel with his duration. *Life eternal* is the felicity and chief good of a soul immortal. 2. The manner of conveyance is free: *I give it to them*; it is not bargained and sold upon a valuable consideration, but given by the free grace of Jesus Christ. The donor has power to give it. He who is the fountain of life, and Father of eternity, has authorized Christ to give eternal life, *ch. xvii. 2*. Not *I will give it*, but *I do give it*; it is a present gift. He gives the assurance of it, the pledge and earnest of it, the first-fruits and foretastes of it, that *spiritual* life which is *eternal* life begun, heaven in the seed, in the bud, in the embryo.

*Thirdly, He has undertaken for their security and preservation to this happiness.*

*a. They shall be saved from everlasting perdition. They shall by no means perish for ever*; so the words are. As there is an eternal life, so there is an eternal destruction; the soul not annihilated, but ruined; its being continued, but its comfort and happiness irrecoverably lost. All believers are saved from this; whatever cross they may come under, they shall not come into condemnation. A man is never undone, till he is in hell, and they shall not go down to that. Shepherds that have large flocks often lose some of the sheep and suffer them to perish; but Christ has engaged that none of his sheep shall perish, not one.

*b. They cannot be kept from their everlasting happiness*; it is in reserve, but he that gives it to them will preserve them to it. (a.) His own power is engaged for them: *Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*. A mighty contest is here supposed about these sheep. The Shepherd is so careful of their welfare that he has them not only within his fold, and under his eye, but in his hand, interested in his special love and taken under his special protection (*all his saints are in thy hand*, Deut. xxxiii. 3); yet their enemies are so daring that they attempt to pluck them out of his hand—his whose own they are, whose care they are; but they cannot, they shall not, do it. Note, Those are safe who are in the hands of the Lord Jesus. The saints are preserved in Christ Jesus: and their salvation is not in their own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator. The Pharisees and rulers did all they could to frighten the disciples of Christ from following him, reproving and threatening them, but Christ saith that they shall not prevail. (b.) His Father's power is likewise engaged for their preservation, v. 29. He now appeared in weakness, and, lest his



security should therefore be thought *insufficient*, he brings in his Father as a further security. Observe, [a.] The power of the Father: *My Father is greater than all*; greater than all the other friends of the church, all the other shepherds, magistrates or ministers, and able to do that for them which they cannot do. Those shepherds slumber and sleep, and it will be easy to pluck the sheep out of their hands; but he keeps his flock day and night. He is greater than all the enemies of the church, all the opposition given to her interests, and able to secure his own against all their insults; he is *greater than all* the combined force of hell and earth. He is greater in wisdom than the *old serpent*, though noted for subtlety; greater in strength than the great red dragon, though his name be *legion*, and his title *principalities and powers*. The devil and his angels have had many a push, many a pluck for the mastery, but have never yet prevailed, Rev. xii. 7, 8. *The Lord on high is mightier*. [b.] The interest of the Father in the sheep, for the sake of which this power is engaged for them: "It is my Father *that gave them to me*, and he is concerned in honour to uphold his gift." They were given to the Son as a trust to be managed by him, and therefore God will still look after them. All the divine power is engaged for the accomplishment of all the divine counsels. [c.] The safety of the saints inferred from these two. If this be so, then *none* (neither man nor devil) is *able to pluck them out of the Father's hand*, not able to deprive them of the grace they have, nor to hinder them from the glory that is designed them; not able to put them out of God's protection, nor get them into their own power. Christ had himself experienced the power of his Father *upholding and strengthening* him, and therefore puts all his followers into his hand too. He that secured the glory of the Redeemer will secure the glory of the redeemed. Further to corroborate the security, that the sheep of Christ may have strong consolation, he asserts the union of these two undertakers: "*I and my Father are one*, and have jointly and severally undertaken for the protection of the saints and their perfection." This denotes more than the harmony, and consent, and good understanding, that were between the Father and the Son in the work of man's redemption. Every good man is so far one with God as to concur with him; therefore it must be meant of the *oneness of the nature* of Father and Son, that they are the same in substance, and equal in power and glory. The fathers urged this both against the Sabellians, to prove the distinction and plurality of the persons, that the Father and the Son are two, and against the Arians, to prove the unity of the nature, that these two are *one*. If we should altogether hold our peace concerning this sense of the words, even the stones which the Jews took up to cast at him would

speak it out, for the Jews understood him as hereby making himself God (v. 33) and he did not deny it. He proves that none could pluck them out of *his hand* because they could not pluck them out of *the Father's hand*, which had not been a conclusive argument if the Son had not had the same almighty power with the Father, and consequently been one with him in essence and operation.

IV. The rage, the outrage, of the Jews against him for this discourse: *The Jews took up stones again*, v. 31. It is not the word that is used before (ch. viii. 59), but *ἐβάσαν λίθους*—they carried stones—great stones, stones that were a *load*, such as they used in stoning malefactors. They brought them from some place at a distance, as it were preparing things for his execution without any judicial process; as if he were convicted of blasphemy upon the notorious evidence of the fact, which needed no further trial. The absurdity of this insult which the Jews offered to Christ will appear if we consider, 1. That they had *imperiously*, not to say *impudently*, challenged him to tell them plainly whether he was the Christ or no; and yet now that he not only said *he* was the Christ, but proved himself so, they condemned him as a malefactor. If the preachers of the truth propose it *modestly*, they are branded as cowards; if *boldly*, as insolent; but *Wisdom is justified of her children*. 2. That when they had before made a similar attempt it was in vain; he *escaped through the midst of them* (ch. viii. 59); yet they repeat their baffled attempt. Daring sinners will throw stones at heaven, though they return upon their own heads; and will strengthen themselves against the Almighty, though none ever hardened themselves against him and prospered.

V. Christ's tender expostulation with them upon occasion of this outrage (v. 32): *Jesus answered what they did*, for we do not find that they *said any thing*, unless perhaps they stirred up the crowd that they had gathered about him to join with them, crying, *Stone him, stone him*, as afterwards, *Crucify him, crucify him*. When he could have answered them with fire from heaven, he mildly replied, *Many good works have I shown you from my Father: for which of those works do you stone me?* Words so very tender that one would think they should have melted a heart of stone. In dealing with his enemies he still argued from his works (men evidence what they are by what they do), his *good works*—καλὰ ἔργα, excellent, eminent works. *Opera eximia vel præclara*; the expression signifies both *great works* and *good works*.

1. The divine power of his works convicted them of the most obstinate infidelity. They were works *from his Father*, so far above the reach and course of nature as to prove him who did them *sent of God*, and acting by commission from him. These *works*

he *showed* them; he did them openly before the people, and not in a corner. His works would bear the test, and refer themselves to the testimony of the most inquisitive and impartial spectators. He did not show his works by candle-light, as those that are concerned only for *show*, but he showed them at noon-day before the world, *ch. xviii. 20.* See *Ps. cxi. 6.* His works so undeniably *demonstrated* that they were an incontestable *demonstration* of the validity of his commission.

2. The divine grace of his works convicted them of the most base ingratitude. The works he did among them were not only miracles, but mercies; not only works of wonder to amaze them, but works of love and kindness to do them good, and so make them good, and endear himself to them. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, which were favours, not only to the persons concerned, but to the public; these he had repeated, and multiplied: "*Now, for which of these do you stone me?*" You cannot say that I have done you any harm, or given you any just provocation; if therefore you will pick a quarrel with me, it must be for some good work, some good turn done you; tell me for which." Note, (1.) The horrid ingratitude that there is in our sins against God and Jesus Christ is a great aggravation of them, and makes them appear exceedingly sinful. See how God argues to this purpose, *Deut. xxxii. 6;* *Jer. ii. 5;* *Mic. vi. 3.* (2.) We must not think it strange if we meet with those who not only hate us without cause, but are our adversaries for our love, *Ps. xxxv. 12;* *xli. 9.* When he asks, *For which of these do you stone me?* as he intimates the abundant satisfaction he had in his own innocency, which gives a man courage in a suffering day, so he puts his persecutors upon considering what was the true reason of their enmity, and asking, as all those should do that create trouble to their neighbour, *Why persecute we him?* As Job advises his friends to do, *Job xix. 28.*

VI. Their vindication of the attempt they made upon Christ, and the cause upon which they grounded their prosecution, *v. 33.* What sin will want fig-leaves with which to cover itself, when even the bloody persecutors of the Son of God could find something to say for themselves?

1. They would not be thought such enemies to their country as to persecute him for a good work: *For a good work we stone thee not.* For indeed they would scarcely allow any of his works to be so. His curing the impotent man (*ch. v.*) and the blind man (*ch. ix.*) were so far from being acknowledged good services to the town, and meritorious, that they were put upon the score of his crimes, because done on the sabbath day. But, if he had done any good works, they would not own that they stoned him *for them*, though these were really the things that did most exasperate them, *ch. xi. 47.* Thus,

though most absurd, they could not be brought to own their absurdities.

2. They would be thought such friends to God and his glory as to prosecute him for blasphemy: *Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.* Here is,

(1.) A pretended zeal for the law. They seem mightily concerned for the honour of the divine majesty, and to be seized with a religious horror at that which they imagined to be a reproach to it. A blasphemer was to be stoned, *Lev. xxiv. 16.* This law, they thought, did not only justify, but sanctify, what they attempted, as *Acts xxvi. 9.* Note, The vilest practices are often varnished with plausible pretences. As nothing is more *courageous* than a well-informed conscience, so nothing is more *outrageous* than a mistaken one. See *Isa. lxvi. 5;* *ch. xvi. 2.*

(2.) A real enmity to the gospel, on which they could not put a greater affront than by representing Christ as a blasphemer. It is no new thing for the worst of characters to be put upon the best of men, by those that resolve to give them the worst of treatment.

[1.] The crime laid to his charge is *blasphemy*, speaking reproachfully and despitefully of God. God himself is out of the sinner's reach, and not capable of receiving any real injury; and therefore enmity to God spits its venom at his name, and so shows its ill-will.

[2.] The proof of the crime: *Thou, being a man, makest thyself God.* As it is God's glory that *he is God*, which we rob him of when we make him altogether such a one as ourselves, so it is his glory that *besides him there is no other*, which we rob him of when we make ourselves, or any creature, altogether like him. Now, *First*, Thus far they were in the right, that what Christ said of himself amounted to this—that he was God, for he had said that he was *one with the Father* and that he would *give eternal life*; and Christ does not deny it, which he would have done if it had been a mistaken inference from his words. But, *Secondly*, They were much mistaken when they looked upon him as a *mere man*, and that the Godhead he claimed was a usurpation, and of his own making. They thought it absurd and impious that such a one as he, who appeared in the fashion of a poor, mean, despicable man, should profess himself the Messiah, and entitle himself to the honours confessedly due to the Son of God. Note, 1. Those who say that Jesus is a *mere man*, and only a *made God*, as the Socinians say, do in effect charge him with blasphemy, but do effectually prove it upon themselves. 2. He who, being a man, a sinful man, makes himself a god as the Pope does, who claims divine powers and prerogatives, is unquestionably a *blasphemer*, and *that antichrist*.

VII. Christ's reply to their accusation of him (for such their vindication of themselves was), and his making good those claims which they imputed to him as blasphemous



(v. 34, &c.), where he proves himself to be no blasphemer, by two arguments:—

1. By an argument taken from *God's word*. He appeals to what was *written in their law*, that is, in the Old Testament; whoever opposes Christ, he is sure to have the scripture *on his side*. It is written (Ps. lxxxii. 6), *I have said, You are gods*. It is an argument *a minore ad majus*—from the less to the greater. If they were gods, much more am I. Observe,

(1.) How he explains the text (v. 35): *He called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken*. The word of God's commission came to them, appointing them to their offices, as judges, and therefore they are called *gods*, Exod. xxii. 28. To some the word of God came immediately, as to Moses; to others in the way of an instituted ordinance. Magistracy is a divine institution; and magistrates are God's delegates, and therefore the scripture calleth them gods; and we are sure that the scripture *cannot be broken*, or broken in upon, or found fault with. Every word of God is *right*; the very style and language of scripture are unexceptionable, and not to be corrected, Matt. v. 18.

(2.) How he applies it. Thus much in general is easily inferred, that those were very rash and unreasonable who condemned Christ as a blasphemer, only for calling himself the Son of God, when yet they themselves called their rulers so, and therein the scripture warranted them. But the argument goes further (v. 36): If magistrates were called gods, because they were commissioned to administer justice in the nation, *say you of him whom the Father hath sanctified, Thou blasphemest?* We have here two things concerning the Lord Jesus:—[1.] The honour done him by the Father, which he justly glories in: He *sanctified him, and sent him into the world*. Magistrates were called the *sons of God*, though the word of God only came to them, and the spirit of government came upon them by measure, as upon Saul; but our Lord Jesus was himself the Word, and had the Spirit without measure. They were constituted for a particular country, city, or nation; but he was sent *into the world*, vested with a universal authority, as Lord of all. They were *sent to*, as persons at a distance; he was *sent forth*, as having been from eternity with God. The Father *sanctified him*, that is, designed him and set him apart to the office of Mediator, and qualified and fitted him for that office. *Sanctifying him* is the same with *sealing him*, ch. vi. 27. Note, Whom the Father sends he sanctifies; whom he designs for holy purposes he prepares with holy principles and dispositions. The holy God will reward, and therefore will employ, none but such as he finds or makes holy. The Father's sanctifying and sending him is here vouched as a sufficient warrant for his calling himself the *Son of God*; for

because he was a *holy thing* he was called the *Son of God*, Luke i. 35. See Rom. i. 4.

[2.] The dishonour done him by the Jews, which he justly complains of—that they impiously said of him, whom the Father had thus dignified, that he was a *blasphemer*, because he called himself the *Son of God*: “*Say you of him so and so? Dare you say so? Dare you thus set your mouths against the heavens? Have your brow and brass enough to tell the God of truth that he lies, or to condemn him that is most just? Look me in the face, and say it if you can. What! say you of the Son of God that he is a blasphemer?*” If devils, whom he came to condemn, had said so of him, it had not been so strange; but that *men*, whom he came to teach and save, should say so of him, *be astonished, O heavens! at this*. See what is the language of an obstinate unbelief; it does, in effect, call the holy Jesus a blasphemer. It is hard to say which is more to be wondered at, that men who breathe in God's air should yet speak such things, or that men who have spoken such things should still be suffered to breathe in God's air. The wickedness of man, and the patience of God, as it were, contend which shall be most wonderful.

2. By an argument taken from *his own works*, v. 37, 38. In the former he only answered the charge of blasphemy by an argument *ad hominem*—turning a man's own argument against himself; but he here makes out his own claims, and proves that he and the Father are one (v. 37, 38): *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not*. Though he might justly have abandoned such blasphemous wretches as incurable, yet he vouchsafes to reason with them. Observe,

(1.) *From what he argues*—from his works, which he had often vouched as his credentials, and the proofs of his mission. As he proved himself sent of God by the *divinity* of his works, so we must prove ourselves allied to Christ by the *Christianity* of ours. [1.] The argument is very cogent; for the works he did were the *works of his Father*, which the Father only could do, and which could not be done in the ordinary course of nature, but only by the sovereign over-ruling power of the God of nature. *Opera Deo propria*—works peculiar to God, and *Opera Deo digna*—works worthy of God—the works of a divine power. He that can dispense with the laws of nature, repeal, alter, and overrule them at his pleasure, by his own power, is certainly the sovereign prince who first instituted and enacted those laws. The miracles which the apostles wrought in his name, by his power, and for the confirmation of his doctrine, corroborated this argument, and continued the evidence of it when he was gone. [2.] It is proposed as fairly as can be desired; and put to a short issue. *First, If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not*. He does not demand a blind and implicit faith, nor an assent to his divine mission further



than he gave proof of it. He did not wind himself into the affections of the people, nor wheedle them by sly insinuations, nor impose upon their credulity by bold assertions, but with the greatest fairness imaginable quitted all demands of their faith, further than he produced warrants for these demands. Christ is no hard master, who expects to reap in assents where he has not sown in arguments. None shall perish for the disbelief of that which was not proposed to them with sufficient motives of credibility, Infinite Wisdom itself being judge. *Secondly*, "But if I do the works of my Father, if I work undeniable miracles for the confirmation of a holy doctrine, *though you believe not me*, though you are so scrupulous as not to take my word, yet *believe the works*: believe your own eyes, your own reason; the thing speaks itself plainly enough." As the invisible things of the Creator are clearly seen by his works of creation and common providence (Rom. i. 20), so the invisible things of the Redeemer were seen by his miracles, and by all his works both of power and mercy; so that those who were not convinced by these works were *without excuse*.

(2.) For what he argues—that you may know and believe, may believe it intelligently, and with an entire satisfaction, that *the Father is in me and I in him*; which is the same with what he had said (v. 30): *I and my Father are one*. The Father was so in the Son as that in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, and it was by a divine power that he wrought his miracles; the Son was so in the Father as that he was perfectly acquainted with the whole of his mind, not by communication, but by consciousness, having lain in his bosom. This we must know; not know and explain (for we cannot by searching find it out to perfection), but know and believe it; acknowledging and adoring the depth, when we cannot find the bottom.

39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand, 40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. 41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. 42 And many believed on him there.

We have here the issue of the conference with the Jews. One would have thought it would have convinced and melted them, but their hearts were hardened. Here we are told,

I. How they attacked him by force. Therefore they sought again to take him, v. 39. Therefore, 1. Because he had fully answered their charge of blasphemy, and wiped off that imputation, so that they could not for shame

go on with their attempts to stone him, therefore they contrived to seize him, and prosecute him as an offender against the state. When they were constrained to drop their attempt by a popular tumult, they would try what they could do under colour of a legal process. See Rev. xii. 13. Or, 2. Because he persevered in the same testimony concerning himself, they persisted in their malice against him. What he had said before he did in effect say again, for the faithful witness never departs from what he has once said; and therefore, having the same provocation, they express the same resentment, and justify their attempt to stone him by another attempt to take him. Such is the temper of a persecuting spirit, and such its policy, *malè facta malè factis tegere ne perpluant—to cover one set of bad deeds with another, lest the former should fall through*.

II. How he avoided them by flight; not an inglorious retreat, in which there was any thing of human infirmity, but a glorious retirement, in which there was much of a divine power. He escaped out of their hands, not by the interposal of any friend that helped him, but by his own wisdom he got clear of them; he drew a veil over himself, or cast a mist before their eyes, or tied the hands of those whose hearts he did not turn. Note, No weapon formed against our Lord Jesus shall prosper, Ps. ii. 4. He escaped, not because he was afraid to suffer, but because his hour was not come. And he who knew how to deliver himself no doubt knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to make a way for them to escape.

III. How he disposed of himself in his retirement: He went away again beyond Jordan, v. 40. The bishop of our souls came not to be fixed in one see, but to go about from place to place, doing good. This great benefactor was never out of his way, for wherever he came there was work to be done. Though Jerusalem was the royal city, yet he made many a kind visit to the country, not only to his own country Galilee, but to other parts, even those that lay most remote beyond Jordan. Now observe,

1. What shelter he found there. He went into a private part of the country, and there he abode; there he found some rest and quietness, when in Jerusalem he could find none. Note, Though persecutors may drive Christ and his gospel out of their own city or country, they cannot drive him or it out of the world. Though Jerusalem was not gathered, nor would be, yet Christ was glorious, and would be. Christ's going now beyond Jordan was a figure of the taking of the kingdom of God from the Jews, and bringing it to the Gentiles. Christ and his gospel have often found better entertainment among the plain country-people than among the wise, the mighty, the noble, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27.

2. What success he found there. He did not go thither merely for his own security,



but to do good there; and he chose to go thither, where John at first baptized (*ch. i. 28*), because there could not but remain some impressions of John's ministry and baptism thereabouts, which would dispose them to receive Christ and his doctrine; for it was not three years since John was baptizing, and Christ was himself baptized here at Bethabara. Christ came hither now to see what fruit there was of all the pains John Baptist had taken among them, and what they retained of the things they then heard and received. The event in some measure answered expectation; for we are told,

(1.) That they flocked after him (*v. 41*): *Many resorted to him.* The return of the means of grace to a place, after they have been for some time intermitted, commonly occasions a great stirring of affections. Some think Christ chose to *abide at Bethabara*, the *house of passage*, where the ferry-boats lay by which they crossed the river Jordan, that the confluence of people thither might give an opportunity of teaching many who would come to hear him when it lay in their way, but who would scarcely go a step out of the road for an opportunity of attending on his word.

(2.) That they reasoned in his favour, and sought arguments to induce them to close with him as much as those at Jerusalem sought objections against him. They said very judiciously, *John did no miracle, but all things that John spoke of this man were true.* Two things they considered, upon recollecting what they had seen and heard from John, and comparing it with Christ's ministry. [1.] That Christ far exceeded John Baptist's power, for *John did no miracle*, but Jesus does many; whence it is easy to infer that Jesus is greater than John. And, if John was so great a prophet, how great then is this Jesus! Christ is best known and acknowledged by such a comparison with others as sets him superlatively above others. Though John came in the spirit and power of Elias, yet he did not work miracles, as Elias did, lest the minds of people should be made to hesitate between him and Jesus; therefore the honour of working miracles was reserved for Jesus as a flower of his crown, that there might be a sensible demonstration, an *undeniable* one, that though he came after John, yet he was *preferred far before him*. [2.] That Christ exactly answered John Baptist's testimony. John not only *did no miracle to divert people from Christ*, but he said a great deal to direct them to Christ, and to turn them over as apprentices to him, and this came to their minds *now*: all things that *John said of this man were true*, that he should be the *Lamb of God*, should *baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire*. Great things John had said of him, which raised their expectations; so that though they had not zeal enough to carry them into his country to enquire after

him, yet, when he came into theirs, and brought his gospel to their doors, they acknowledged him as great as John had said he would be. When we get acquainted with Christ, and come to know him experimentally, we find all things that the scripture saith of him to be true; nay, and that the reality exceeds the report, *1 Kings, x. 6, 7.* John Baptist was now dead and gone, and yet his hearers profited by what they had heard formerly, and, by comparing what they heard then with what they saw now, they gained a double advantage; for, *First*, They were confirmed in their belief that *John was a prophet*, who foretold such things, and spoke of the eminency to which this Jesus would arrive, though his beginning was so small. *Secondly*, They were prepared to believe that *Jesus was the Christ*, in whom they saw those things accomplished which John foretold. By this we see that the success and efficacy of the word preached are not confined to the life of the preacher, nor do they expire with his breath, but that which seemed as *water spilt upon the ground* may afterwards be *gathered up again*. See *Zech. i. 5, 6.*

(3.) That many believed on him there. Believing that he who wrought such miracles, and in whom John's predictions were fulfilled, was what he declared himself to be, the Son of God, they gave up themselves to him as his disciples, *v. 42.* An emphasis is here to be laid, [1.] Upon the persons that believed on him; they were *many*. While those that received and embraced his doctrine at Jerusalem were but as the grape-gleanings of the vintage, those that believed on him in the country, beyond the Jordan, were a full harvest gathered in to him. [2.] Upon the place where this was; it was where John had been preaching and baptizing and had had great success; *there* many believed on the Lord Jesus. Where the preaching of the doctrine of repentance has had success, as desired, there the preaching of the doctrine of reconciliation and gospel grace is most likely to be prosperous. Where John has been acceptable, Jesus will not be unacceptable. The jubilee-trumpet sounds sweetest in the ears of those who in the day of atonement have afflicted their souls for sin.

## CHAP. XI.

In this chapter we have the history of that illustrious miracle which Christ wrought a little before his death—the raising of Lazarus to life, which is recorded only by this evangelist; for the other three confine themselves to what Christ did in Galilee, where he resided most, and scarcely ever carried their history into Jerusalem till the passion-week: whereas John's memoirs relate chiefly to what passed at Jerusalem; this passage there is reserved for his pen. Some suggest that, when the other evangelists wrote, Lazarus was alive, and it would not well agree either with his safety or with his humility to have it recorded till now, when it is supposed he was dead. It is more largely recorded than any other of Christ's miracles, not only because there are many circumstances of it so very instructive and the miracle of itself so great a proof of Christ's mission, but because it was an earnest of that which was to be the crowning proof of all—Christ's own resurrection. Here is, I. The tidings sent to our Lord Jesus of the sickness of Lazarus, and his entertainment of those tidings, *ver. 1—16.* II. The visit he made to Lazarus's relations when he had heard of his death, and their entertainment

of the visit, ver. 17—32. III. The miracle wrought in the raising of Lazarus from the dead, ver. 33—44. IV. The effect wrought by this miracle upon others, ver. 45—57.

NOW a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) 3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4 When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. 7 Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, Let us go into Judæa again. 8 *His* disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? 9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. 10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. 11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. 12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. 13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. 14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. 16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

We have in these verses,

I. A particular account of the parties principally concerned in this story, v. 1, 2. 1. They lived at *Bethany*, a village not far from Jerusalem, where Christ usually lodged when he came up to the feasts. It is here called the town of Mary and Martha, that is, the town where they dwelt, as Bethsaida is called

the city of Andrew and Peter, ch. i. 44. For I see no reason to think, as some do, that Martha and Mary were owners of the town, and the rest were *their* tenants. 2. Here was a brother named *Lazarus*; his *Hebrew* name probably was *Eleazar*, which being contracted, and a Greek termination put to it, is made *Lazarus*. Perhaps in prospect of this history our Saviour made use of the name of *Lazarus* in that parable wherein he designed to set forth the blessedness of the righteous in the bosom of Abraham immediately after death, Luke xvi. 22. 3. Here were two sisters, *Martha* and *Mary*, who seem to have been the housekeepers, and to have managed the affairs of the family, while perhaps Lazarus lived a retired life, and gave himself to study and contemplation. Here was a decent, happy, well-ordered family, and a family that Christ was very much conversant with, where yet there was neither husband nor wife (for aught that appears), but the house kept by a brother, and his sisters dwelling together in unity. 4. One of the sisters is particularly described to be *that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment*, v. 2. Some think she was that woman that we read of, Luke vii. 37, 38, who had been a *sinner*, a bad woman. I rather think it refers to that anointing of Christ which this evangelist relates (ch. xii. 3); for the evangelists do never refer one to another, but John frequently refers in one place of his gospel to another. Extraordinary acts of piety and devotion, that come from an honest principle of love to Christ, will not only find acceptance with him, but gain reputation in the church, Matt. xxvi. 13. This was she *whose brother Lazarus was sick*; and the sickness of those we love is our affliction. The more friends we have the more frequently we are thus afflicted by sympathy; and the dearer they are the more grievous it is. The multiplying of our comforts is but the multiplying of our cares and crosses.

II. The tidings that were sent to our Lord Jesus of the sickness of Lazarus, v. 3. *His sisters* knew where Jesus was, a great way off beyond Jordan, and they sent a special messenger to him, to acquaint him with the affliction of their family, in which they manifest, 1. The affection and concern they had for their brother. Though, it is likely, his estate would come to them after his death, yet they earnestly desired his life, as they ought to do. They showed their love to him now that he was sick, for a *brother is born for adversity*, and so is a sister too. We must weep with our friends when they weep, as well as rejoice with them when they rejoice. 2. The regard they had to the Lord Jesus, whom they were willing to make acquainted with all their concerns, and, like Jephthah, to utter all their words before him. Though God knows all our wants, and griefs, and cares, he will know them from us, and is honoured by our laying them before him.



The message they sent was very short, not *petitioning*, much less *prescribing* or *pressing*, but barely relating the case with the tender insinuation of a powerful plea, *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick*. They do not say, *He whom we love, but he whom thou lovest*. Our greatest encouragements in prayer are fetched from God himself and from his grace. They do not say, *Lord, behold, he who loveth thee, but he whom thou lovest*; for *herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us*. Our love to him is not worth speaking of, but his to us can never be enough spoken of. Note, (1.) There are some of the friends and followers of the Lord Jesus for whom he has a special kindness above others. Among the twelve there was one whom Jesus loved. (2.) It is no new thing for those whom Christ loves to be sick: all things come alike to all. Bodily distempers correct the corruption, and try the graces, of God's people. (3.) It is a great comfort to us, when we are sick, to have those about us that will pray for us. (4.) We have great encouragement in our prayers for those who are sick, if we have ground to hope that they are such as Christ loves; and we have reason to love and pray for those whom we have reason to think Christ loves and cares for.

III. An account how Christ entertained the tidings brought him of the illness of his friend.

1. He prognosticated the event and issue of the sickness, and probably sent it as a message to the sisters of Lazarus by the express, to support them while he delayed to come to them. Two things he prognosticates:—

(1.) *This sickness is not unto death*. It was mortal, proved *fatal*, and no doubt but Lazarus was truly dead for four days. But, [1.] That was not the errand upon which this sickness was sent; it came not, as in a common case, to be a summons to the grave, but there was a further intention in it. Had it been sent on that errand, his *rising from the dead would have defeated it*. [2.] That was not the final effect of this sickness. He *died*, and yet it might be said he did not *die*, for *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat*—That is not said to be done which is not done for a perpetuity. Death is an everlasting farewell to this world; it is the way whence we shall not return; and in this sense it was *not unto death*. The grave was not his *long home*, his *house of eternity*. Thus Christ said of the maid whom he proposed to restore to life, *She is not dead*. The sickness of good people, how threatening soever, is *not unto death*, for it is not unto eternal death. The body's death to this world is the soul's birth into another world; when we or our friends are sick, we make it our principal support that there is hope of a recovery, but in that we may be disappointed; therefore it is our wisdom to build upon that in which we cannot be disappointed; if they belong to Christ, let the worst come to the

worst, they cannot be *hurt of the second death*, and then not much hurt of the first.

(2.) *But it is for the glory of God*, that an opportunity may be given for the manifesting of God's glorious power. The afflictions of the saints are designed for the glory of God, that he may have opportunity of showing them favour; for the sweetest mercies, and the most affecting, are those which are occasioned by trouble. Let this reconcile us to the darkest dispensations of Providence, they are all for the glory of God, this sickness, this loss, or this disappointment, is so; and, if God be glorified, we ought to be satisfied, Lev. x. 3. It was for the glory of God, for it was that *the Son of God might be glorified thereby*, as it gave him occasion to work that glorious miracle, the *raising of him from the dead*. As, before, the man was *born blind* that Christ might have the honour of curing him (ch. ix. 3), so Lazarus must be sick and die, that Christ may be glorified as the Lord of life. Let this comfort those whom Christ loves under all their grievances that the design of them all is that *the Son of God may be glorified thereby*, his wisdom, power, and goodness, glorified in supporting and relieving them; see 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

2. He deferred visiting his patient, v. 5, 6. They had pleaded, *Lord, it is he whom thou lovest*, and the plea is allowed (v. 5): *Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus*. Thus the claims of faith are ratified in the court of heaven. Now one would think it should follow, *When he heard therefore that he was sick* he made all the haste that he could to him; if he loved them, now was a time to show it by hastening to them, for he knew they impatiently expected him. But he took the contrary way to show his love: it is not said, He loved them and yet he lingered; but he loved them and therefore he lingered; when he heard that his friend was sick, instead of coming post to him, he abode *two days still in the same place where he was*.

(1.) *He loved them*, that is, had a great opinion of Martha and Mary, of their wisdom and grace, of their faith and patience, above others of his disciples, and therefore he deferred coming to them, that he might try them, that their trial might at last be found *to praise and honour*. (2.) *He loved them*, that is, he designed to do something great and extraordinary for them, to work such a miracle for their relief as he had not wrought for any of his friends; and therefore he delayed coming to them, that Lazarus might be *dead and buried* before he came. If Christ had come presently, and cured the sickness of Lazarus, he had done no more than he did for many; if he had raised him to life when newly dead, no more than he had done for some: but, deferring his relief so long, he had an opportunity of doing more for him than for any. Note, God hath gracious intentions even in seeming delays, Isa. liv. 7, 8; xlix. 14, &c. Christ's friends at Bethany were

not out of his thoughts, though, when he heard of their distress, he made no haste to them. When the work of deliverance, temporal or spiritual, public or personal, stands at a stay, it does but stay the time, and *every thing is beautiful in its season*.

IV. The discourse he had with his disciples when he was about to visit his friends at Bethany, v. 7—16. The conference is so very free and familiar as to make out what Christ saith, *I have called you friends*. Two things he discourses about—his own *danger* and Lazarus's *death*.

1. His own danger in going into Judea, v. 7—10.

(1.) Here is the notice which Christ gave his disciples of his purpose to go into Judea towards Jerusalem. His disciples were the men of his counsel, and to them he saith (v. 7), "*Let us go into Judea again*, though those of Judea are unworthy of such a favour." Thus Christ repeats the tenders of his mercy to those who have often rejected them. Now this may be considered, [1.] As a purpose of his kindness to his friends at Bethany, whose affliction, and all the aggravating circumstances of it, he knew very well, though no more expresses were sent to him; for he was present in spirit, though absent in body. When he knew they were brought to the last extremity, when the brother and sisters had given and taken a final farewell, "Now," saith he, "let us go to Judea." Christ will arise in favour of his people when the *time to favour them, yea, the set time, is come*; and the worst time is commonly the set time—when *our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our parts*; then they shall know that *I am the Lord when I have opened the graves*, Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 13. In the depths of affliction, let this therefore keep us out of the depths of despair, that man's extremity is God's opportunity, *Jehovah-jireh*. Or, [2.] As a trial of the courage of the disciples, whether they would venture to follow him thither, where they had so lately been frightened by an attempt upon their Master's life, which they looked upon as an attempt upon theirs too. To go to Judea, which was so lately made *too hot* for them, was a saying that *proved them*. But Christ did not say, "*Go you into Judea*, and I will stay and take shelter here;" no, *Let us go*. Note, Christ never brings his people into any peril but he accompanies them in it, and is with them even when they *walk through the valley of the shadow of death*.

(2.) Their objection against this journey (v. 8): *Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?* Here, [1.] They remind him of the danger he had been in there not long since. Christ's disciples are apt to make a greater matter of sufferings than their Master does, and to remember injuries longer. He had put up with the affront, it was over and gone, and forgotten, but his disciples could not forget it; *of late*,

*now*—now, as if it were this very day, they *sought to stone thee*. Though it was at least two months ago, the remembrance of the fright was fresh in their minds. [2.] They marvel that he will *go thither again*. "Wilt thou favour those with thy presence that have expelled thee out of their coasts?" Christ's ways in passing by offences are *above our ways*. "Wilt thou expose thyself among a people that are so desperately enraged against thee? *Goest thou thither again*, where thou hast been so ill used?" Here they showed great care for their Master's safety, as Peter did, when he said, *Master, spare thyself*: had Christ been inclined to shift off suffering, he did not want friends to persuade him to it, but he had *opened his mouth to the Lord*, and he would not, he could not, go back. Yet, while the disciples show a concern for his safety, they discover at the same time, *First*, A distrust of his power; as if he could not secure both himself and them now in Judea as well as he had done formerly. Is his arm shortened? When we are solicitous for the interests of Christ's church and kingdom in the world, we must yet rest satisfied in the wisdom and power of the Lord Jesus, who knows how to secure a flock of sheep in the midst of a herd of wolves. *Secondly*, A secret fear of suffering themselves; for they count upon this if he suffer. When our own private interests happen to run in the same channel with those of the public, we are apt to think ourselves zealous for the Lord of hosts, when really we are only zealous for our own wealth, credit, ease, and safety, and *seek our own things*, under colour of seeking the things of Christ; we have therefore need nicely to distinguish upon our principles.

(3.) Christ's answer to this objection (v. 9, 10): *Are there not twelve hours in the day?* The Jews divided every day into twelve hours, and made their hours longer or shorter according as the days were, so that an hour with them was the twelfth part of the time between sun and sun; so some. Or, lying much more south than we, their days were nearer twelve hours long than ours. The divine Providence has given us day-light to work by, and lengthens it out to a competent time; and, reckoning the year round, *every country* has just as much *daylight* as *night*, and so much more as the *twilights* amount to. Man's life is a *day*; this day is divided into divers ages, states, and opportunities, as into hours shorter or longer, as God has appointed; the consideration of this should make us not only *very busy*, as to the *work* of life (if there were *twelve hours in the day*, each of them ought to be filled up with duty, and none of them trifled away), but also *very easy* as to the perils of life; our day shall be lengthened out till our work be done, and our testimony finished. This Christ applies to his case, and shows why he must go to Judea, because he had a *clear call* to go.



For the opening of this, [1.] He shows the comfort and satisfaction which a man has in his own mind while he keeps in the way of his duty, as it is in general prescribed by the word of God, and particularly determined by the providence of God: *If any man walk in the day, he stumbles not*; that is, If a man keep close to his duty, and mind that, and set the will of God before him as his rule, with an impartial respect to all God's commandments, he does not *hesitate* in his own mind, but, *walking uprightly, walks surely*, and with a holy confidence. As he that walks in the day stumbles not, but goes on steadily and cheerfully in his way, *because he sees the light of this world*, and by it sees his way before him; so a good man, without any collateral security or sinister aims, relies upon the word of God as his rule, and regards the glory of God as his end, *because he sees those two great lights*, and keeps his eye upon them; thus he is furnished with a faithful guide in all his doubts, and a powerful guard in all his dangers, Gal. vi. 4; Ps. cxix. 6. Christ, wherever he went, walked *in the day*, and so shall we, if we follow his steps. [2.] He shows the pain and peril a man is in who walks not according to this rule (v. 19): *If a man walk in the night, he stumbles*; that is, If a man walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and according to the course of this world,—if he consult his own carnal reasonings more than the will and glory of God,—he falls into temptations and snares, is liable to great uneasiness and frightful apprehensions, trembles at the *shaking of a leaf*, and *flee*s when none pursues; while an upright man *laughs at the shaking of the spear*, and stands undaunted when ten thousand invade. See Isa. xxxiii. 14—16. He stumbles, *because there is no light in him*, for light in us is that to our moral actions which light about us is to our natural actions. He has not a good principle within; he is not sincere; his eye is evil. Thus Christ not only justifies his purpose of going into Judea, but encourages his disciples to go along with him, and fear no evil.

2. The death of Lazarus is here discoursed of between Christ and his disciples, v. 11—16, where we have,

(1.) The notice Christ gave his disciples of the death of Lazarus, and an intimation that his business into Judea was to look after him, v. 11. After he had prepared his disciples for this dangerous march into an enemy's country, he then gives them,

[1.] Plain intelligence of the death of Lazarus, though he had received no advice of it: *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth*. See here how Christ calls a believer and a believer's death

*First*, He calls a believer his friend: *Our friend Lazarus*. Note, 1. There is a covenant of friendship between Christ and be-

lievers, and a friendly affection and communion pursuant to it, which our Lord Jesus will own and not be ashamed of. *His secret is with the righteous*. 2. Those whom Christ is pleased to own as his friends all his disciples should take for *theirs*. Christ speaks of Lazarus as their common friend: *Our friend*. 3. Death itself does not break the bond of friendship between Christ and a believer. Lazarus is dead, and yet he is still *our friend*.

*Secondly*, He calls the death of a believer a *sleep*: *he sleepeth*. It is good to call death by such names and titles as will help to make it more *familiar* and less *formidable* to us. The death of Lazarus was in a peculiar sense a sleep, as that of Jairus's daughter, because he was to be raised again speedily; and, since we are sure to *rise again at last*, why should that make any great difference? And why should not the believing hope of that resurrection to eternal life make it as easy to us to put off the body and die as it is to put off our clothes and go to sleep? A good Christian, when he dies, does but sleep: he rests from the labours of the day past, and is refreshing himself for the next morning. Nay, herein death has the advantage of sleep, that sleep is only the *parenthesis*, but death is the *period*, of our cares and toils. The soul does not sleep, but becomes more active; but the body sleeps without any toss, without any terror; not distempered nor disturbed. The grave to the wicked is a prison, and its grave-clothes as the shackles of a criminal reserved for execution; but to the godly it is a bed, and all its bands as the soft and downy fetters of an easy quiet sleep. Though the body *corrupt*, it will rise in the morning as if it had never seen corruption; it is but putting off our clothes to be mended and trimmed up for the marriage day, the coronation day, to which we must rise. See Isa. lvii. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 14. The Greeks called their burying-places *dormitories*—*κοιμητήρια*.

[2.] Particular intimations of his favourable intentions concerning Lazarus: *but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep*. He could have done it, and yet have staid where he was: he that restored at a distance one that was *dying* (ch. iv. 50) could have raised at a distance one that was *dead*; but he would put this honour upon the miracle, to work it by the grave side: *I go, to awake him*. As sleep is a resemblance of death, so a man's awaking out of sleep when he is called, especially when he is called by his own name, is an emblem of the resurrection (Job xiv. 15): *Then shalt thou call*. Christ had no sooner said, *Our friend sleeps*, but presently he adds, *I go, that I may awake him*. When Christ tells his people at any time how bad the case is he lets them know in the same breath how easily, how quickly, he can mend it. Christ's telling his disciples that this was his business to Judea might help to take off their fear of going

with him thither; he did not go upon a public errand to the temple, but a private visit, which would not so much expose him and them; and, besides, it was to do a kindness to a family to which they were all obliged.

(2.) Their mistake of the meaning of this notice, and the blunder they made about it (v. 12, 13): They said, *Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well*. This intimates, [1.] *Some concern* they had for their friend Lazarus; they hoped he would recover; *σωθήσεται—he shall be saved* from dying at this time. Probably they had understood, by the messenger who brought news of his illness, that one of the most threatening symptoms he was under was that he was restless, and could get no sleep; and now that they heard he slept they concluded the fever was going off, and the worst was past. Sleep is often nature's physic, and reviving to its weak and weary powers. This is true of the sleep of death; if a good Christian so *sleep*, he shall do well, better than he did here. [2.] *A greater concern* for themselves; for hereby they insinuate that it was now needless for Christ to go to him, and expose himself and them. "If he sleep, he will be quickly well, and we may stay where we are." Thus we are willing to hope that the good work which we are called to do will do itself, or will be done by some other hand, if there be peril in the doing of it.

(3.) This mistake of theirs rectified (v. 13): *Jesus spoke of his death*. See here, [1.] How dull of understanding Christ's disciples as yet were. Let us not therefore condemn all those as heretics who mistake the sense of some of Christ's sayings. It is not good to aggravate our brethren's mistakes; yet this was a *gross* one, for it had easily been prevented if they had remembered how frequently death is called a sleep in the Old Testament. They should have understood Christ when he spoke scripture language. Besides, it would sound oddly for their Master to undertake a journey of two or three days only to awake a friend out of a natural sleep, which any one else might do. What Christ undertakes to do, we may be sure, is something great and uncommon, and a work *worthy of himself*. [2.] How carefully the evangelist corrects this error: *Jesus spoke of his death*. Those that speak in an unknown tongue, or use similitudes, should learn hence to *explain themselves*, and pray that they may interpret, to prevent mistakes.

(4.) The plain and express declaration which Jesus made to them of the death of Lazarus, and his resolution to go to Bethany, v. 14, 15. [1.] He gives them notice of the death of Lazarus; what he had before said darkly he now says plainly, and without a figure: *Lazarus is dead*, v. 14. Christ takes cognizance of the death of his saints, for it is precious in his sight (Ps. cxvi. 15), and he is not pleased if we do not consider it, and lay it to heart. See what a compassionate

teacher Christ is, and how he condescends to those that are out of the way, and by his subsequent sayings and doings explains the difficulties of what went before. [2.] He gives them the reason why he had delayed so long to go and see him: *I am glad for your sakes that I was not there*. If he had been there time enough, he would have healed his disease and prevented his death, which would have been much for the comfort of Lazarus's friends; but then his disciples would have seen no further proof of his power than what they had often seen, and, consequently, their faith had received no improvement; but now that he went and raised him from the dead, as there were many brought to *believe on him* who before did not (v. 45), so there was much done towards the perfecting of what was lacking in the faith of those that did, which Christ aimed at: *To the intent that you may believe*. [3.] He resolves now to go to Bethany, and take his disciples along with him: *Let us go unto him*. Not, "Let us go to his sisters, to comfort them" (which is the utmost we can do), but, *Let us go to him*; for Christ can *show wonders to the dead*. Death, which will separate us from all our other friends, and cut us off from correspondence with them, cannot separate us from the love of Christ, nor put us out of the reach of his calls; as he will maintain his *covenant with the dust*, so he can make visits to the dust. *Lazarus is dead*, but *let us go to him*; though perhaps those who said, *If he sleep there is no need to go*, were ready to say, *If he be dead it is to no purpose to go*.

(5.) Thomas exciting his fellow-disciples cheerfully to attend their Master's motions (v. 16): *Thomas, who is called Didymus*. Thomas in Hebrew and Didymus in Greek signify a *twin*; it is said of Rebekah (Gen. xxv. 24) that there were *twins in her womb*; the word is *Thomim*. Probably Thomas was a *twin*. He said to his fellow-disciples (who probably looked with fear and concern upon one another when Christ had said so positively, *Let us go to him*), very courageously, *Let us also go that we may die with him; with him, that is,*

[1.] With Lazarus, who was now dead; so some take it. Lazarus was a dear and loving friend both to Christ and his disciples, and perhaps Thomas had a particular intimacy with him. Now if he be dead, saith he, *let us even go and die with him*. For, *First*, "If we *survive*, we know not how to *live without him*." Probably Lazarus had done them many good offices, sheltered them, and provided for them, and been to them *instead of eyes*; and now that he was gone they had *no man like-minded*, and "Therefore," saith he, "we had as good die with him." Thus we are sometimes ready to think our lives bound up in the lives of some that were dear to us: but God will teach us to live, and to live comfortably, upon himself, when those are gone without whom we



thought we could not live. But this is not all. *Secondly*, "If we die, we hope to be happy with him." Such a firm belief he has of a happiness on the other side death, and such good hope through grace of their own and Lazarus's interest in it, that he is willing they should all go and *die with him*. It is better to die, and go along with our Christian friends to that world which is enriched by their removal to it, than stay behind in a world that is impoverished by their departure out of it. The more of our friends are translated hence, the fewer cords we have to bind us to this earth, and the more to draw our hearts heavenwards. How pleasantly does the good man speak of dying, as if it were but undressing and going to bed!

[2.] "Let us go and die with our Master, who is now exposing himself to death by venturing into Judea;" and so I rather think it is meant. "If he will go into danger, let us also go and take our lot with him, according to the command we received, *Follow me*." Thomas knew so much of the malice of the Jews against Christ, and the counsels of God concerning him, which he had often told them of, that it was no foreign supposition that he was now going to die. And now Thomas manifests, *First*, A gracious readiness to die with Christ himself, flowing from strong affections to him, though his faith was weak, as appeared afterwards, *ch. xiv. 5; xx. 25. Where thou diest I will die*, Ruth i. 17. *Secondly*, A zealous desire to help his fellow-disciples into the same frame: "Let us go, one and all, and die with him; if they stone him, let them stone us; who would desire to survive such a Master?" Thus, in difficult times, Christians should animate one another. We may each of us say, *Let us die with him*. Note, The consideration of the dying of the Lord Jesus should make us willing to die whenever God calls for us.

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already. 18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: 19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. 20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat *still* in the house. 21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. 23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. 24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection

at the last day. 25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? 27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. 28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. 29 As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him. 30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. 31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. 32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

The matter being determined, that Christ will go to Judea, and his disciples with him, they address themselves to their journey; in this journey some circumstances happened which the other evangelists record, as the healing of the blind man at Jericho, and the conversion of Zaccheus. We must not reckon ourselves out of our way, while we are in the way of doing good; nor be so intent upon one good office as to neglect another.

At length, he comes near to Bethany, which is said to be about *fifteen furlongs* from Jerusalem, about two measured miles, *v. 18*. Notice is taken of this, that this miracle was in effect wrought in *Jerusalem*, and so was put to her score. Christ's miracles in Galilee were more *numerous*, but those in or near Jerusalem were more *illustrious*; there he healed one that had been diseased *thirty-eight years*, another that had been blind *from his birth*, and raised one that had been dead *four days*. To Bethany Christ came, and observe,

I. What posture he found his friends there in. When he had been last with them it is probable that he left them well, in health and joy; but when we part from our friends (though Christ knew) we know not what changes may affect us or them before we meet again.

1. He found his friend Lazarus in the

grave, v. 17. When he came near the town, probably by the burying-place belonging to the town, he was told by the neighbours, or some persons whom he met, that Lazarus had been *four days buried*. Some think that Lazarus died the same day that the messenger came to Jesus with the tidings of his sickness, and so reckon two days for his abode in the same place and two days for his journey. I rather think that Lazarus died at the very instant that Jesus said, "*Our friend sleepeth*, he is now newly fallen asleep;" and that the time between his death and burial (which among the Jews was but short), with the four days of his lying in the grave, was taken up in this journey; for Christ travelled publicly, as appears by his passing through Jericho, and his abode at Zaccheus's house took up some time. Promised salvations, though they always come surely, yet often come slowly.

2. He found his friends that survived in grief. Martha and Mary were almost swallowed up with sorrow for the death of their brother, which is intimated where it is said that *many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them*. Note, (1.) Ordinarily, where death is there are *mourners*, especially when those that were agreeable and amiable to their relations, and serviceable to their generation, are taken away. The house where death is is called *the house of mourning*, Eccl. vii. 2. When man goes to his long home the *mourners go about the streets* (Eccl. xii. 5), or rather sit alone, and *keep silence*. Here was Martha's house, a house where the fear of God was, and on which his blessing rested, yet made a *house of mourning*. Grace will keep sorrow from the heart (*ch. xiv. 1*), not from the house. (2.) Where there are mourners there ought to be comforters. It is a duty we owe to those that are in sorrow to mourn with them, and to comfort them; and our mourning with them will be some comfort to them. When we are under the present impressions of grief, we are apt to forget those things which would minister comfort to us, and therefore have need of remembrancers. It is a mercy to have remembrancers when we are in sorrow, and our duty to be remembrancers to those who are in sorrow. The Jewish doctors laid great stress upon this, obliging their disciples to make conscience of comforting the mourners after the burial of the dead. They comforted them *concerning their brother*, that is, by speaking to them of him, not only of the good name he left behind, but of the happy state he was gone to. When godly relations and friends are taken from us, whatever occasion we have to be afflicted concerning ourselves, who are left behind and miss them, we have reason to be comforted concerning those who are gone before us to a happiness where they have no need of us. This visit which the Jews made to Martha and Mary is an evidence that they were persons of distinction, and

made a figure; as also that they behaved obligingly to all; so that though they were followers of Christ, yet those who had no respect for him were civil to them. There was also a providence in it, that so many Jews, Jewish ladies it is probable, should come together, just at this time, to comfort the mourners, that they might be unexceptionable witnesses of the miracle, and see what miserable comforters they were, in comparison with Christ. Christ did not usually send for witnesses to his miracles, and yet had none been by but relations this would have been excepted against; therefore God's counsel so ordered it that these should come together accidentally, to bear their testimony to it, that infidelity might stop her mouth.

II. What passed between him and his surviving friends at this interview. When Christ defers his visits for a time they are thereby made the more acceptable, much the more welcome; so it was here. His departures endear his returns, and his absence teaches us how to value his presence. We have here,

1. The interview between Christ and Martha.

(1.) We are told that she *went and met him*, v. 20. [1.] It should seem that Martha was earnestly expecting Christ's arrival, and enquiring for it. Either she had sent out messengers, to bring her tidings of his first approach, or she had often asked, *Saw you him whom my soul loveth*? so that the first who discovered him ran to her with the welcome news. However it was, she heard of his coming before he arrived. She had waited long, and often asked, *Is he come?* and could hear no tidings of him; but long-looked-for came at last. *At the end the vision will speak, and not lie*. [2.] Martha, when the good news was brought that Jesus was coming, threw all aside, and *went and met him*, in token of a most affectionate welcome. She waived all ceremony and compliment to the Jews who came to visit her, and hastened to go and meet Jesus. Note, When God by his grace or providence is coming towards us in ways of mercy and comfort, we should go forth by faith, hope, and prayer to meet him. Some suggest that Martha went out of the town to meet Jesus, to let him know that there were several Jews in the house, who were no friends to him, that if he pleased he might keep out of the way of them. [3.] When Martha went to meet Jesus, Mary *sat still in the house*. Some think she did not hear the tidings, being in her drawing-room, receiving visits of condolence, while Martha who was busied in the household-affairs had early notice of it. Perhaps Martha would not tell her sister that Christ was coming, being ambitious of the honour of receiving him first. *Sancta est prudentia clam fratribus clam parentibus ad Christum esse conferre*—*Holy prudence conducts us to Christ, while brethren and parents know not what we are*



doing.—Maldonat. in locum. Others think she *did* hear that Christ was come, but was so overwhelmed with sorrow that she did not care to stir, choosing rather to indulge her sorrow, and to sit poring upon her affliction, and saying, *I do well to mourn*. Comparing this story with that in Luke x. 38, &c., we may observe the different tempers of these two sisters, and the temptations and advantages of each. Martha's natural temper was active and busy; she loved to be here and there, and at the end of every thing; and this had been a snare to her when by it she was not only careful and cumbered about many things, but hindered from the exercises of devotion: but now in a day of affliction this active temper did her a kindness, kept the grief from her heart, and made her forward to meet Christ, and so she received comfort from him the sooner. On the other hand, Mary's natural temper was contemplative and reserved. This had been formerly an advantage to her, when it placed her at Christ's feet, to hear his word, and enabled her there to attend upon him without those distractions with which Martha was cumbered; but now in the day of affliction that same temper proved a snare to her, made her less able to grapple with her grief, and disposed her to melancholy: *But Mary sat still in the house*. See here how much it will be our wisdom carefully to watch against the temptations, and improve the advantages, of our natural temper.

(2.) Here is fully related the discourse between Christ and Martha.

[1.] Martha's address to Christ, v. 21, 22.

*First*, She complains of Christ's long absence and delay. She said it, not only with grief for the death of her brother, but with some resentment of the seeming unkindness of the Master: *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*. Here is, 1. Some evidence of faith. She believed Christ's *vower*, that, though her brother's sickness was very grievous, yet he could have cured it, and so have prevented his death. She believed his *pity*, that if he had but seen Lazarus in his extreme illness, and his dear relations all in tears about him, he would have had compassion, and have prevented so sad a breach, for his compassions fail not. But, 2. Here are sad instances of unbelief. Her faith was true, but weak as a bruised reed, for she limits the power of Christ, in saying, *If thou hadst been here*; whereas she ought to have known that Christ could cure at a distance, and that his gracious operations were not limited to his bodily presence. She reflects likewise upon the wisdom and kindness of Christ, that he did not hasten to them when they sent for him, as if he had not *timed his business* well, and now might as well have staid away, and not have come at all, as to come too late; and, as for any help now, she can scarcely entertain the thought of it.

*Secondly*, Yet she corrects and comforts herself with the thoughts of the prevailing interest Christ had in heaven; at least, she blames herself for blaming her Master, and for suggesting that he comes too late: *for I know that even now, desperate as the case is, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee*. Observe, 1. How *willing* her hope was. Though she had not courage to ask of Jesus that he should raise him to life again, there having been no precedent as yet of any one raised to life that had been so long dead, yet, like a modest petitioner, she humbly recommends the case to the wise and compassionate consideration of the Lord Jesus. When we know not what in particular to ask or expect, let us in general refer ourselves to God, let him do as seemeth him good. *Judicii tui est, non presumptionis mea—I leave it to thy judgment, not to my presumption*.—Aug. in locum. When we know not what to pray for, it is our comfort that the great Intercessor knows what to ask for us, and is always heard. 2. How *weak* her faith was. She should have said, "Lord, thou canst do whatsoever thou wilt;" but she only says, "Thou canst obtain whatsoever thou prayest for." She had forgotten that the Son has *life in himself*, that he wrought miracles by his own power. Yet both these considerations must be taken in for the encouragement of our faith and hope, and neither excluded: the dominion Christ has on earth and his interest and intercession in heaven. He has in the one hand the golden sceptre, and in the other the golden censer; his power is always predominant, his intercession always prevalent.

[2.] The comfortable word which Christ gave to Martha, in answer to her pathetic address (v. 23): *Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again*. Martha, in her complaint, looked back, reflecting with regret that Christ was not there, for then, thinks she, my brother had been now alive. We are apt, in such cases, to add to our own trouble, by fancying what *might have been*. "If such a method had been taken, such a physician employed, my friend had not died;" which is more than we know: but what good does this do? When God's will is done, our business is to submit to him. Christ directs Martha, and us in her, to look forward, and to think what *shall be*, for that is a certainty, and yields sure comfort: *Thy brother shall rise again*. *First*, This was true of Lazarus in a sense peculiar to him: he was now presently to be raised; but Christ speaks of it in general as a thing to be done, not which he himself would do, so humbly did our Lord Jesus speak of what he did. He also expresses it *ambiguously*, leaving her uncertain at first whether he would raise him presently or not till the last day, that he might try her faith and patience. *Secondly*, It is applicable to all the saints, and their resurrection at the last day. Note, It is matter of comfort to us,

when we have buried our godly friends and relations, to think that they shall *rise again*. As the soul at death is not lost, but gone before, so the body is not lost, but laid up. 'Thunk you hear Christ saying, "Thy parent, thy child, thy yoke-fellow, shall rise again; these dry bones shall live."

[3.] The faith which Martha mixed with this word, and the unbelief mixed with this faith, v. 24.

*First*, She accounts it a *faithful saying* that *he shall rise again at the last day*. Though the doctrine of the resurrection was to have its full proof from Christ's resurrection, yet, as it was already revealed, she firmly believed it, Acts xxiv. 15. 1. That there shall be a *last day*, with which all the days of time shall be numbered and finished. 2. That there shall be a *general* resurrection at that day, when the earth and sea shall give up their dead. 3. That there shall be a *particular* resurrection of each one: "I know that I shall rise again, and this and the other relation that was dear to me." As bone shall return to his bone in that day, so friend to his friend.

*Secondly*, Yet she seems to think this saying not so well worthy of all acceptance as really it was: "*I know he shall rise again at the last day*; but what are we the better for that now?" As if the comforts of the resurrection to eternal life were not worth speaking of, or yielded not satisfaction sufficient to balance her affliction. See our weakness and folly, that we suffer present sensible things to make a deeper impression upon us, both of grief and joy, than those things which are the objects of faith. *I know that he shall rise again at the last day*; and is not this enough? She seems to think it is not. Thus, by our discontent under present crosses, we greatly undervalue our future hopes, and put a slight upon them, as if not worth regarding.

[4.] The further instruction and encouragement which Jesus Christ gave her; for he will not quench the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed. He said to her, *I am the resurrection and the life*, v. 25, 26. Two things Christ possesses her with the belief of, in reference to the present distress; and they are the things which our faith should fasten upon in the like cases.

*First*, The power of Christ, his sovereign power: *I am the resurrection and the life*, the fountain of life, and the head and author of the resurrection. Martha believed that at his prayer God would give any thing, but he would have her know that by his word he could work any thing. Martha believed a resurrection at the *last day*; Christ tells her that he had that power lodged in his own hand, that the dead were to *hear his voice* (ch. v. 25), whence it was easy to infer, He that could raise a world of men that had been dead many ages could doubtless raise one man that had been dead but *four days*. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to all good Christians that Jesus Christ is the re-

surrection and the life, and will be so to them. *Resurrection* is a return to life; Christ is the author of that return, and of that life to which it is a return. We look for the *resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come*, and Christ is both; the author and principle of both, and the ground of our hope of both.

*Secondly*, The promises of the new covenant, which give us further ground of hope that *we shall live*. Observe,

a. To whom these promises are made—to those that believe in Jesus Christ, to those that consent to, and confide in, Jesus Christ as the only Mediator of reconciliation and communion between God and man, that receive the record God has given in his word concerning his Son, sincerely comply with it, and answer all the great intentions of it. The condition of the latter promise is thus expressed: *Whosoever liveth and believeth in me*, which may be understood, either, (a.) Of *natural life*: *Whosoever lives in this world*, whether he be Jew or Gentile, wherever he lives, if he believe in Christ, he shall live by him. Yet it limits the time: *Whoever during life*, while he is here in this state of probation, *believes in me*, shall be happy in me, but after death it will be too late. *Whoever lives and believes*, that is, lives by faith (Gal. ii. 20), has a faith that influences his conversation. Or, (b.) Of *spiritual life*: He that *lives and believes* is he that by faith is born again to a heavenly and divine life, to whom to *live is Christ*—that makes Christ the life of his soul.

b. What the promises are (v. 25): *Though he die, yet shall he live*, nay, *he shall never die*, v. 26. Man consists of body and soul, and provision is made for the happiness of both.

(a.) For the *body*: here is the promise of a *blessed resurrection*. Though the body be dead because of sin (there is no remedy but it will die), yet it *shall live again*. All the difficulties that attend the state of the dead are here overlooked, and made nothing of. Though the sentence of death was just, though the effects of death be dismal, though the bands of death be strong, though he be dead and buried, dead and putrefied, though the scattered dust be so mixed with common dust that no art of man can distinguish, much less separate them, put the case as strongly as you will on that side, yet we are sure that *he shall live again*: the body shall be raised a glorious body.

(b.) For the *soul*: here is the promise of a *blessed immortality*. He that *liveth and believeth*, who, being united to Christ by faith, lives spiritually by virtue of that union, he shall *never die*. That spiritual life shall never be extinguished, but perfected in eternal life. As the soul, being in its nature spiritual, is therefore immortal; so if by faith it live a spiritual life, consonant to its nature, its felicity shall be immortal too. *It shall never*



die, shall never be otherwise than easy and happy, and there is not any intermission or interruption of its life, as there is of the life of the body. The *mortality* of the body shall at length be *swallowed up of life*; but the life of the soul, the believing soul, shall be immediately at death swallowed up of immortality. *He shall not die, eis tòn aiōna, for ever—Non morietur in æternum*; so Cyprian quotes it. The body shall not be *for ever* dead in the grave; it dies (like the two witnesses) but for a *time, times, and the dividing of time*; and when time shall be no more, and all the divisions of it shall be numbered and finished, a *spirit of life from God shall enter into it*. But this is not all; the soul shall not die that death which is *for ever*, shall *not die eternally*. *Blessed and holy*, that is, blessed and happy, is he that by faith *has part in the first resurrection*, has part in Christ, who is that resurrection; for on such the *second death*, which is a death for ever, *shall have no power*; see ch. vi. 40. Christ asks her, "*Believest thou this? Canst thou assent to it with application? Canst thou take my word for it?*" Note, When we have read or heard the word of Christ, concerning the great things of the other world, we should seriously put it to ourselves, "*Do we believe this, this truth in particular, this which is attended with so many difficulties, this which is suited to my case? Does my belief of it realize it to me, and give my soul an assurance of it, so that I can say, not only this I believe, but thus I believe it?*" Martha was doting upon her brother's being raised to life in this world; before Christ gave her hopes of this, he directed her thoughts to another life, another world: "No matter for that, but *believest thou this* that I tell thee concerning the *future state?*" The crosses and comforts of this present time would not make such an impression upon us as they do if we did but believe the things of eternity as we ought.

[5.] Martha's unfeigned assent yielded to what Christ said, v. 27. We have here Martha's creed, the good confession she witnessed, the same with that for which Peter was commended (Matt. xvi. 16, 17), and it is the *conclusion of the whole matter*.

*First*, Here is the *guide of her faith*, and that is the word of Christ; without any alteration, exception, or proviso, she takes it entire as Christ had said it: *Yea, Lord*, whereby she subscribes to the truth of all and every part of that which Christ had promised, in his own sense: *Even so*. Faith is, an echo to divine revelation, returns the same words, and resolves to abide by them: *Yea, Lord, As the word did make it so I believe and take it*, said queen Elizabeth.

*Secondly*, The *ground of her faith*, and that is the authority of Christ; she believes *this* because she believes that he who saith it is Christ. She has recourse to the foundation for the support of the superstructure. *I believe, πιστεύωκα, "I have believed that thou*

art Christ, and therefore *I do believe that.*" Observe here,

a. What she believed and confessed concerning Jesus; three things, all to the same effect:—(a.) That he was the Christ, or Messiah, promised and expected under this name and notion, the *anointed one*. (b.) That he was the *Son of God*; so the Messiah was called (Ps. ii. 7), not by office only, but by nature. (c.) That it was *he who should come* into the world, the *ἐρχόμενος*. That blessing of blessings which the church had for so many ages waited for as *future*, she embraced as *present*.

b. What she inferred hence, and what she alleged this for. If she admits this, that Jesus is the Christ, there is no difficulty in believing that he is the resurrection and the life; for if he be the Christ, then, (a.) He is the fountain of light and truth, and we may take all his sayings for faithful and divine, upon his own word. If he be the Christ, he is that prophet whom we are to hear in *all things*. (b.) He is the fountain of life and blessedness, and we may therefore depend upon his ability as well as upon his veracity. How shall bodies, turned to dust, *live again*? How shall souls, clogged and clouded as ours are, *live for ever*? We could not believe this, but that we believe him that undertakes it to be the *Son of God*, who has life in himself, and has it for us.

2. The interview between Christ and Mary the other sister. And here observe,

(1.) The notice which Martha gave her of Christ's coming (v. 28): *When she had so said*, as one that needed to say no more, *she went her way*, easy in her mind, and *called Mary her sister*. [1.] Martha, having received instruction and comfort from Christ herself, called her sister to share with her. Time was when Martha would have drawn Mary from Christ, to come and help her in *much serving* (Luke x. 40); but, to make her amends for this, here she is industrious to draw her to Christ. [2.] She called her *secretly*, and whispered it in her ear, because there was company by, Jews, who were no friends to Christ. The saints are called *into the fellowship of Jesus Christ* by an invitation that is secret and distinguishing, given to them and not to others; they have meat to eat that the world knows not of, joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with. [3.] She called her by order from Christ; he bade her *go call her sister*. The call that is *effectual*, whoever brings it, is sent by Christ. *The Master is come, and calleth for thee*. *First*, She calls Christ the *Master*, διδάσκαλος, a *teaching master*; by that title he was commonly called and known among them. Mr George Herbert took pleasure in calling Christ, *my Master*. *Secondly*, She triumphs in his arrival: *The Master is come*. He whom we have long wished and waited for, *he is come, he is come*; this was the best cordial in the present distress. "*Lazarus is*

gone, and our comfort in him is gone; but the *Master is come*, who is better than the dearest friend, and has that in him which will abundantly make up all our losses. He is come who is our *teacher*, who will teach us how to get good by our sorrow (Ps. xciv. 12), who will *teach*, and so comfort." *Thirdly*, She invites her sister to go and meet him: "*He calls for thee*, enquires what is become of thee, and would have thee sent for." Note, When Christ our Master comes, he *calls for us*. He comes in his word and ordinances, calls us to them, calls us by them, calls us to himself. He calls for thee in particular, for thee *by name* (Ps. xxvii. 8); and, if he call thee, he will cure thee, he will comfort thee.

(2.) The haste which Mary made to Christ upon this notice given her (v. 29): *As soon as she heard this good news, that the Master was come, she arose quickly*, and came to him. She little thought how near he was to her, for he is often nearer to them that mourn in Zion than they are aware of; but, when she knew how near he was, she started up, and in a transport of joy ran to meet him. The least intimation of Christ's gracious approaches is enough to a lively faith, which stands ready to take the hint, and answer the first call. When Christ was come, [1.] She did not consult the decorum of her mourning, but, forgetting ceremony, and the common usage in such cases, she ran through the town, to meet Christ. Let no nice punctilios of decency and honour deprive us at any time of opportunities of conversing with Christ. [2.] She did not consult her neighbours, the Jews that were *with her, comforting her*; she left them all, to come to him, and did not only not ask their advice, but not so much as ask their leave, or beg their pardon for her rudeness.

(3.) We are told (v. 30) where she found the Master; he was not yet come into Bethany, but was at the town's end, *in that place where Martha met him*. See here, [1.] Christ's love to his work. He staid near the place where the grave was, that he might be ready to go to it. He would not go into the town, to *refresh himself* after the fatigue of his journey, till he had done the work he came to do; nor would he go into the town, lest it should look like ostentation, and a design to levy a crowd to be spectators of the miracle. [2.] Mary's love to Christ; still she *loved much*. Though Christ had seemed unkind in his delays, yet she could take nothing amiss from him. Let us go thus to Christ *without the camp*, Heb. xiii. 13.

(4.) The misconception which the Jews that were with Mary made of her going away so hastily (v. 31): They said, *She goes to the grave, to weep there*. Martha bore up better under this affliction than Mary did, who was a woman of a tender and sorrowful spirit; such was her natural temper. Those that are so have need to watch against melan-

choly, and ought to be pitied and helped. These comforters found that their formalities did her no service, but that she hardened herself in sorrow: and therefore concluded when she went out, and turned that way, it was to go *to the grave and weep there*. See, [1.] What often is the folly and fault of mourners; they contrive how to aggravate their own grief, and to make bad worse. We are apt in such cases to take a strange pleasure in our own pain, and to say, *We do well* to be passionate in our grief, even unto death; we are apt to fasten upon those things that aggravate the affliction, and what good does this do us, when it is our duty to reconcile ourselves to the will of God in it? Why should mourners go to the grave to weep there, when they sorrow not as those that have no hope? Affliction of itself is grievous; why should we make it more so? [2.] What is the wisdom and duty of comforters; and that is, to prevent as much as may be, in those who grieve inordinately, the revival of the sorrow, and to divert it. Those Jews that followed Mary were thereby led to Christ, and became the witnesses of one of his most glorious miracles. It is good cleaving to Christ's friends in their sorrows, for thereby we may come to know him better.

(5.) Mary's address to our Lord Jesus (v. 32): She came, attended with her train of comforters, and *fell down at his feet*, as one overwhelmed with a passionate sorrow, and said with many tears (as appears v. 33), *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*, as Martha said before, for they had often said it to one another. Now here, [1.] Her posture is very humble and submissive: *She fell down at his feet*, which was more than Martha did, who had a greater command of her passions. She fell down as a sinking mourner, but fell down at his feet as a humble petitioner. This Mary had sat *at Christ's feet to hear his word* (Luke x. 39), and here we find her there on another errand. Note, Those that in a day of peace place themselves at Christ's feet, to receive instructions from him, may with comfort and confidence in a day of trouble cast themselves at his feet with hope to find favour with him. She *fell at his feet*, as one submitting to his will in what was done, and referring herself to his good-will in what was now to be done. When we are in affliction we must cast ourselves at Christ's feet in a penitent sorrow and self-abasement for sin, and a patient resignation of ourselves to the divine disposal. Mary's casting herself at Christ's feet was in token of the profound respect and veneration she had for him. Thus subjects were wont to give honour to their kings and princes; but, our Lord Jesus not appearing in secular glory as an earthly prince, those who by this posture of adoration gave honour to him certainly looked upon him as more than man, and intended hereby to give him divine honour. Mary hereby made profession of the



Christian faith as truly as Martha did, and in effect said, *I believe that thou art the Christ; bowing the knee to Christ, and confessing him with the tongue*, are put together as equivalent, Rom. xiv. 11; Phil. ii. 10, 11. This she did in presence of *the Jews* that attended her, who, though friends to her and her family, yet were bitter enemies to Christ; yet in their sight she fell at Christ's feet, as one that was neither ashamed to own the veneration she had for Christ nor afraid of disobliging her friends and neighbours by it. Let them resent it as they pleased, she falls at his feet; and, if this be to be vile, she will be yet more vile; see Cant. viii. 1. We serve a Master of whom we have no reason to be ashamed, and whose acceptance of our services is sufficient to balance the reproach of men and all their revilings. [2.] Her address is very pathetic: *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*. Christ's delay was designed for the best, and proved so; yet both the sisters very indecently *cast the same in his teeth*, and in effect charge him with the death of their brother. This repeated challenge he might justly have resented, might have told them he had something else to do than to be at their beck and to attend them; he must come when his business would permit him: but not a word of this; he considered the circumstances of their affliction, and that losers think they may have leave to speak, and therefore overlooked the rudeness of this welcome, and gave us an example of mildness and meekness in such cases. Mary added no more, as Martha did; but it appears, by what follows, that what she fell short in words she made up in tears; she said less than Martha, but wept more; and tears of devout affection have a voice, a loud prevailing voice, in the ears of Christ; no rhetoric like this.

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. 34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? 38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. 40 Jesus saith unto

her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Here we have, I. Christ's tender sympathy with his afflicted friends, and the share he took to himself in their sorrows, which appeared three ways:—

1. By the inward groans and troubles of his spirit (v. 33): *Jesus saw Mary weeping for the loss of a loving brother, and the Jews that came with her weeping for the loss of a good neighbour and friend; when he saw what a place of weepers, a bochim, this was, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled*. See here,

(1.) The griefs of the sons of men represented in the tears of Mary and her friends. What an emblem was here of this world, this vale of tears! Nature itself teaches us to weep over our dear relations, when they are removed by death; Providence thereby calls to *weeping and mourning*. It is probable that Lazarus's estate devolved upon his sisters, and was a considerable addition to their fortunes; and in such a case people say, now-a-days, though they cannot wish their relations dead (that is, they do not say they do), yet, if they were dead, they would not wish them alive again; but these sisters, whatever they got by their brother's death, heartily wished him alive again. Religion teaches us likewise to *weep with them that weep*, as these Jews wept with Mary, considering that we ourselves also *are in the body*. Those that truly love their friends will share with them in their joys and griefs; for what is friendship but a communication of affections? Job xvi. 5.

(2.) The grace of the Son of God and his compassion towards those that are in misery. *In all their afflictions he is afflicted*, Isa. lxiii. 9; Judg. x. 16. When Christ saw them all in tears,

[1.] He *groaned in the spirit*. He suffered himself to be tempted (as we are when we are disturbed by some great affliction, yet without sin. This was an expression, either,

First, Of his displeasure at the inordinate grief of those about him, as Mark v. 39: "Why make ye this ado and weep? What a hurry is here! does this become those that believe in a God, a heaven, and another world?" Or, Secondly, Of his feeling sense of the calamitous state of human life, and the power of death, to which fallen man is subject. Having now to make a vigorous attack upon death and the grave, he thus stirred up himself to the encounter, *put on the garments of vengeance, and his fury it upheld him*; and that he might the more resolutely undertake the redress of our grievances, and the cure of our griefs, he was pleased to make himself sensible of the weight of them, and under the burden of them he now *groaned in spirit*. Or, Thirdly, It was an expression of his kind sympathy with his friends that were in sorrow. Here was the sounding of the bowels, the mercies which the afflicted church so earnestly solicits, Is. lxiii. 15. Christ not only seemed concerned, but he *groaned in the spirit*; he was inwardly and sincerely affected with the case. David's pretended friends counterfeited sympathy, to disguise their enmity (Ps. xli. 6); but we must learn of Christ to have our love and sympathy without dissimulation. Christ's was a deep and hearty sigh.

[2.] He was troubled. He troubled himself; so the phrase is, very significantly. He had all the passions and affections of the human nature, for in all things he must be like to his brethren; but he had a perfect command of them, so that they were never up, but when and as they were called; he was never troubled, but when he troubled himself, as he saw cause. He often composed himself to trouble, but was never discomposed or disordered by it. He was voluntary both in his passion and in his compassion. He had power to lay down his grief, and power to take it again.

2. His concern for them appeared by his kind enquiry after the poor remains of his deceased friend (v. 34) "Where have you laid him?" He knew where he was laid, and yet asks, because, (1.) He would thus express himself as a man, even when he was going to exert the power of a God. Being found in fashion as a man, he accommodates himself to the way and manner of the sons of men: *Non nescit, sed quasi nescit*—He is not ignorant, but he makes as if he were, saith Austin here. (2.) He enquired where the grave was, lest, if he had gone straight to it of his own knowledge, the unbelieving Jews should have thence taken occasion to suspect a collusion between him and Lazarus, and a trick in the case. Many expositors observe this from Chrysostom. (3.) He would thus divert the grief of his mourning friends, by raising their expectations of something great; as if he had said, "I did not come hither with an address of condolence, to mingle a few fruitless insignificant tears with yours;

no, I have other work to do; come, let us adjourn to the grave, and go about our business there." Note, A serious address to our work is the best remedy against inordinate grief. (4.) He would hereby intimate to us the special care he takes of the bodies of the saints while they lie in the grave; he takes notice where they are laid, and will look after them. There is not only a covenant with the dust, but a guard upon it.

3. It appeared by his tears. Those about him did not tell him where the body was buried, but desired him to come and see, and led him directly to the grave, that his eye might yet more affect his heart with the calamity.

(1.) As he was going to the grave, as if he had been following the corpse thither, *Jesus wept*, v. 35. A very short verse, but it affords many useful instructions. [1.] That Jesus Christ was really and truly man, and partook with the children, not only of flesh and blood, but of a human soul, susceptible of the impressions of joy, and grief, and other affections. Christ gave this proof of his humanity, in both senses of the word; that, as a man, he could weep, and, as a merciful man, he would weep, before he gave this proof of his divinity. [2.] That he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, as was foretold, Isa. liii. 3. We never read that he laughed, but more than once we have him in tears. Thus he shows not only that a mournful state will consist with the love of God, but that those who sow to the Spirit must sow in tears. [3.] Tears of compassion well become Christians, and make them most to resemble Christ. It is a relief to those who are in sorrow to have their friends sympathize with them, especially such a friend as their Lord Jesus.

(2.) Different constructions were put upon Christ's weeping. [1.] Some made a kind and candid interpretation of it, and what was very natural (v. 36): *Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!* They seem to wonder that he should have so strong an affection for one to whom he was not related, and with whom he had not had any long acquaintance, for Christ spent most of his time in Galilee, a great way from Bethany. It becomes us, according to this example of Christ, to show our love to our friends, both living and dying. We must sorrow for our brethren that sleep in Jesus as those that are full of love, though not void of hope; as the devout men that buried Stephen, Acts viii. 2. Though our tears profit not the dead, they embalm their memory. These tears were indications of his particular love to Lazarus, but he has given proofs no less evident of his love to all the saints, in that he died for them. When he only dropped a tear over Lazarus, they said, *See how he loved him!* Much more reason have we to say so, for whom he hath laid down his life. *See how he loved us! Greater love has no*



man than this [2.] Others made a peevish unfair reflection upon it, as if these tears bespoke his inability to help his friend (v. 37): *Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have prevented the death of Lazarus?* Here it is slyly insinuated, *First*, That the death of Lazarus being (as it seemed by his tears) a great grief to him, if he could have prevented it he would, and therefore because he *did not* they incline to think that he *could not*; as, when he was dying, they concluded that he could not, because he did not, save himself, and *come down from the cross*; not considering that divine power is always directed in its operations by divine wisdom, not merely according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will, wherein it becomes us to acquiesce. If Christ's friends, whom he loves, die,—if his church, whom he loves, be persecuted and afflicted,—we must not impute it to any defect either in his power or love, but conclude that it is because he sees it for the best. *Secondly*, That therefore it might justly be questioned whether he did indeed *open the eyes of the blind*, that is, whether it was not a sham. His not working this miracle they thought enough to invalidate the former; at least, it should seem that he had a limited power, and therefore not a divine one. Christ soon convinced these *whisperers*, by raising Lazarus from the dead, which was the greater work, that he could have prevented his death, but therefore did not because he would glorify himself the more.

II. Christ's approach to the grave, and the preparation that was made for working this miracle.

1. Christ repeats his groans upon his coming near the grave (v. 38): *Again groaning in himself, he comes to the grave*; he groaned, (1.) Being displeased at the unbelief of those who spoke doubtfully of his power, and blamed him for not preventing the death of Lazarus; he was *grieved for the hardness of their hearts*. He never groaned so much for his own pains and sufferings as for the sins and follies of men, particularly Jerusalem's, Matt. xxiii. 37. (2.) Being affected with the fresh lamentations which, it is likely, the mourning sisters made, when they came near the grave, more passionately and pathetically than before, his tender spirit was sensibly touched with their wailings. (3.) Some think that he *groaned in spirit* because, to gratify the desire of his friends, he was to bring Lazarus again into this sinful troublesome world, from that rest into which he was newly entered; it would be a kindness to Martha and Mary, but it would be to him like thrusting one out to a stormy sea again who was newly got into a safe and quiet harbour. If Lazarus had been let alone, Christ would quickly have gone to him into the other world; but, being restored to life, Christ quickly left him behind in this world. (4.) Christ groaned as one that would

affect himself with the calamitous state of the human nature, as subject to death, from which he was now about to redeem Lazarus. Thus he stirred up himself to take hold on God in the prayer he was to make, that he might *offer it up with strong crying*, Heb. v. 7. Ministers, when they are sent by the preaching of the gospel to raise dead souls, should be much affected with the deplorable condition of those they preach to and pray for, and groan in themselves to think of it.

2. The grave wherein Lazarus lay is here described: *It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it*. The graves of the common people, probably, were dug as ours are; but persons of distinction were, as with us, interred in vaults, so Lazarus was, and such was the sepulchre in which Christ was buried. Probably this fashion was kept up among the Jews, in imitation of the patriarchs, who buried their dead in the cave of Machpelah, Gen. xxiii. 19. This care taken of the dead bodies of their friends intimates their expectation of their resurrection; they reckoned the solemnity of the funeral ended when the stone was rolled to the grave, or, as here, *laid upon it*, like that on the mouth of the den into which Daniel was cast (Dan. vi. 17), that the *purpose might not be changed*; intimating that the dead are separated from the living, and gone the *way whence they shall not return*. This stone was probably a *grave-stone*, with an inscription upon it, which the Greeks called *μνησίον*—a memorandum, because it is both a *memorial* of the dead and a *memento* to the living, putting them in remembrance of that which we are all concerned to remember. It is called by the Latins, *Monumentum*, à *monendo*, because it gives warning.

3. Orders are given to remove the stone (v. 39): *Take away the stone*. He would have this stone removed, that all the standers-by might see the body lie dead in the sepulchre, and that way might be made for its coming out, and it might appear to be a true body, and not a *ghost* or *spectre*. He would have some of the servants to remove it, that they might be witnesses, by the smell of the putrefaction of the body, and that therefore it was truly dead. It is a good step towards the raising of a soul to spiritual life when the stone is taken away, when prejudices are removed and got over, and way made for the word to the heart, that it may do its work there, and say what it has to say.

4. An objection made by Martha against the opening of the grave: *Lord, by this time he stinketh, or is become noisome, for he has been dead four days, τετραπαις γάρ ἐστι, quadriduanus est*; he is *four days old* in the other world; a citizen and inhabitant of the grave of four days' standing. Probably Martha perceived the body to smell, as they were removing the stone, and therefore cried out thus.

(1.) It is easy to observe hence the nature

of human bodies: four days are but a little while, yet what a great change will this time make with the body of man, if it be but so long *without food*, much more if so long *without life*! Dead bodies (saith Dr. Hammond) after a revolution of the humours, which is completed in seventy-two hours, naturally tend to putrefaction; and the Jews say that by the fourth day after death the body is so altered that one cannot be sure it is such a person; so Maimonides in *Light-foot*. Christ rose the third day because he was not to see *corruption*.

(2.) It is not so easy to say what was Martha's design in saying this. [1.] Some think she said it in a due tenderness, and such as decency teaches to the dead body; now that it began to putrefy, she did not care it should be thus publicly shown and made a spectacle of. [2.] Others think she said it out of a concern for Christ, lest the smell of the dead body should be *offensive* to him. That which is very noisome is compared to an open sepulchre, Ps. v. 9. If there were any thing noisome she would not have her Master near it; but he was none of those tender and delicate ones that cannot bear an ill smell; if he had, he would not have visited the world of mankind, which sin had made a perfect dunghill, altogether noisome, Ps. xiv. 3. [3.] It should seem, by Christ's answer, that it was the language of her unbelief and distrust: "Lord, it is too late now to attempt any kindness to him; his body begins to rot, and it is impossible that this putrid carcase should *live*." She gives up his case as helpless and hopeless, there having been no instances, either of late or formerly, of any raised to life after they had begun to see corruption. When *our bones are dried*, we are ready to say, *Our hope is lost*. Yet this distrustful word of hers served to make the miracle both the more evident and the more illustrious; by this it appeared that he was truly dead, and not in a trance; for, though the posture of a dead body might be counterfeited, the smell could not. Her suggesting that *it could not be done* puts the more honour upon him that *did it*.

5. The gentle reproof Christ gave to Martha for the weakness of her faith (v. 40): *Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?* This word of his to her was not before recorded; it is probable that he said it to her when she had said (v. 27), *Lord, I believe*: and it is enough that it is recorded here, where it is repeated. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus has given us all the assurances imaginable that a sincere faith shall at length be crowned with a blessed vision: "If thou believe, thou shalt see God's glorious appearances for thee in this world, and to thee in the other world." If we will take Christ's word, and rely on his power and faithfulness, we shall see the glory of God, and be happy in the sight. (2.) We have need to be often

reminded of these *sure mercies* with which our Lord Jesus hath encouraged us. Christ does not give a direct answer to what Martha had said, nor any particular promise of what he would do, but orders her to keep hold of the general assurances he had already given: *Only believe*. We are apt to forget what Christ has spoken, and need him to put us in mind of it by his Spirit: "*Said I not unto thee so and so?* And dost thou think that he will ever unsay it?"

6. The opening of the grave, in obedience to Christ's order, notwithstanding Martha's objection (v. 41): *Then they took away the stone*. When Martha was satisfied, and had waived her objection, *then* they proceeded. If we will see the glory of God, we must let Christ take his own way, and not *prescribe* but *subscribe* to him. *They took away the stone*, and this was all they could do; Christ only could *give life*. What man can do is but to *prepare the way of the Lord*, to fill the valleys, and level the hills, and, as here, to *take away the stone*.

III The miracle itself wrought. The spectators, invited by the rolling away of the stone, gathered about the grave, not to commit *dust to dust, earth to earth*, but to receive dust from the dust, and earth from the earth again; and, their expectations being raised, our Lord Jesus addresses himself to his work.

1. He applies himself to his *living Father in heaven*, so he had called him (ch. vi. 17), and so eyes him here.

(1.) The gesture he used was very significant: *He lifted up his eyes*, an outward expression of the elevation of his mind, and to show those who stood by whence he derived his power; also to set us an example; this outward sign is hereby recommended to our practice; see ch. xvii. 1. Look how those will answer it who profanely ridicule it; but that which is especially charged upon us hereby is to *lift up our hearts* to God in the heavens; what is prayer, but the ascent of the soul to God, and the directing of its affections and motions heavenward? He *lifted up* his eyes, as looking above, looking beyond the grave where Lazarus lay, and overlooking all the difficulties that arose thence, that he might have his eyes fixed upon the divine omnipotence; to teach us to do as Abraham, who considered not his *own body now dead, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb*, never took these into his thoughts, and so gained such a degree of faith as not to *stagger at the promise*, Rom. iv. 20.

(2.) His address to God was with great assurance, and such a confidence as became him. *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me*.

[1.] He has here taught us, by his own example, *First*, In prayer to call God Father, and to draw nigh to him as children to a father, with a humble reverence, and yet with a holy boldness. *Secondly*, In our prayers to *praise him*, and, when we come to beg for further mercy, thankfully to acknowledge



former favours. Thanksgivings, which bespeak God's glory (not our own, like the Pharisee's God, *I thank thee*), are decent forms into which to put our supplications.

[2.] But our Saviour's thanksgiving here was intended to express the unshaken assurance he had of the effecting of this miracle, which he had in his own power to do in concurrence with his Father: "*Father, I thank thee* that my will and thine are in this matter, as always, the same." Elijah and Elisha raised the dead, as servants, by *entreaty*; but Christ, as a Son, by *authority*, having life in himself, and power to quicken whom he would; and he speaks of this as his own act (v. 11): *I go, that I may awake him*; yet he speaks of it as what he had obtained by prayer, for his Father *heard him*: probably he put up the prayer for it when he *groaned in spirit* once and again (v. 33, 38), in a *mental* prayer, with groanings which could not be uttered.

First, Christ speaks of this miracle as an answer to prayer, 1. Because he would thus *humble himself*; though he was a Son, yet *learned he this obedience*, to ask and receive. His mediatorial crown was granted him upon request, though it is *of right*, Ps. ii. 8, and *ch. xvii. 5*. He prays for the glory he had before the world was, though, having never forfeited it, he might have demanded it. 2. Because he was pleased thus to *honour prayer*, making it the key wherewith even he unlocked the treasures of divine power and grace. Thus he would teach us in prayer, by the lively exercise of faith, to *enter into the holiest*.

Secondly, Christ, being assured that his prayer was answered, professes,

a. His thankful acceptance of this answer: *I thank thee that thou hast heard me*. Though the miracle was not yet wrought, yet the prayer was answered, and he triumphs before the victory. No other can pretend to such an assurance as Christ had; yet we may by faith in the promise have a prospect of mercy before it be actually given in, and may rejoice in that prospect, and give God thanks for it. In David's devotions, the same psalm which begins with prayer for a mercy closes with thanksgivings for it. Note, (a.) Mercies in answer to prayer ought in a special manner to be acknowledged with thankfulness. Besides the grant of the mercy itself, we are to value it as a great favour to have our poor prayers taken notice of. (b.) We ought to *meet* the first appearances of the return of prayer with early thanksgivings. As God *answers us with mercy*, even *before we call*, and *hears while we are yet speaking*, so we should answer him with praise even before he grants, and give him thanks while he is yet speaking good words and comfortable words.

b. His cheerful assurance of a ready answer at any time (v. 42): *And I know that thou hearest me always*. Let none think that this

was some uncommon favour granted him now, such as he never had before, nor should ever have again; no, he had the same divine power going along with him in his whole undertaking, and undertook nothing but what he knew to be agreeable to the counsel of God's will. "*I gave thanks*" (saith he) "for being heard in this, because I am sure to be heard in every thing." See here, (a.) The interest our Lord Jesus had in heaven; the Father *heard him always*, he had access to the Father upon every occasion, and success with him in every errand. And we may be sure that his interest is not the less for his going to heaven, which may encourage us to depend upon his intercession, and put all our petitions into his hand, for we are sure that him the Father *hears always*. (b.) The confidence he had of that interest: *I knew it*. He did not in the least hesitate or doubt concerning it, but had an entire satisfaction in his own mind of the Father's complacency in him and concurrence with him in every thing. We cannot have such a particular assurance as he had; but this we know, that *whatsoever we ask according to his will he heareth us*, 1 John v. 14, 15.

Thirdly, But why should Christ give this public intimation of his obtaining this miracle by prayer? He adds, *It is because of the people who stand by, that they may believe that thou hast sent me; for prayer may preach*. 1. It was to obviate the objections of his enemies, and their reflections. It was blasphemously suggested by the Pharisees, and their creatures, that he wrought his miracles by compact with the devil; now, to evidence the contrary, he openly made his address to God, using *prayers*, and not *charms*, not *peeping and muttering* as those did that used *familiar spirits* (Isa. viii. 19), but, with elevated eyes and voice professing his communication with Heaven, and dependence on Heaven. 2. It was to corroborate the faith of those that were well inclined to him: *That they may believe that thou hast sent me*, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Moses, to show that God sent him, made the earth open and swallow men up (Num. xvi. 31); Elijah, to show that God sent him, made fire come from heaven and devour men; for the law was a dispensation of terror and death: but Christ proves his mission by raising to life one that was dead. Some give this sense: had Christ declared his doing it freely by his own power, some of his weak disciples, who as yet understood not his divine nature, would have thought he took too much upon him, and have been stumbled at it. These *babes* could not bear that *strong meat*, therefore he chooses to speak of his power as received and derived; he speaks self-denyingly of himself, that he might speak the more plainly to us. *Non ita respexit ad suam dignitatem atque ad nostram salutem—In what he said, he consulted not so much his dignity as our salvation.*—Jansenius.

2. He now applies himself to his *dead friend in the earth*. He cried with a loud voice, *Lazarus come forth.*

(1.) He could have raised Lazarus by a silent exertion of his power and will, and the indiscernible operations of the Spirit of life; but he did it by a call, a loud call,

[1.] To be significant of the power then put forth for the raising of Lazarus, how he *created this new thing*; he spoke, and it was done. He cried aloud, to signify the greatness of the work, and of the power employed in it, and to excite himself as it were to this attack upon the gates of death, as soldiers engage with a shout. Speaking to Lazarus, it was proper to cry with a loud voice; for, *First*, The soul of Lazarus, which was to be called back, was at a distance, not hovering about the grave, as the Jews fancied, but removed to Hades, the world of spirits; now it is natural to speak loud when we call to those at a distance. *Secondly*, The body of Lazarus, which was to be called up, was *asleep*, and we usually speak loud when we would awake any out of sleep. He cried with a loud voice that the scripture might be fulfilled (Isa. xlv. 19), *I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth.*

[2.] To be typical of other works of wonder, and particularly other resurrections, which the power of Christ was to effect. This loud call was a figure, *First*, Of the gospel call, by which dead souls were to be brought out of the grave of sin, which resurrection Christ had formerly spoken of (ch. v. 25), and of his word as the means of it (ch. vi. 63), and now he gives a specimen of it. By his word, he saith to souls, *Live*, yea, he saith to them, *Live*, Ezek. xvi. 6. *Arise from the dead*, Eph. v. 14. The Spirit of life from God entered into those that had been dead and dry bones, when Ezekiel prophesied over them, Ezek. xxxvii. 10. Those who infer from the commands of the word to *turn and live* that man has a power of his own to convert and regenerate himself might as well infer from this call to Lazarus that he had a power to raise himself to life. *Secondly*, Of the sound of the archangel's trumpet at the last day, with which they that sleep in the dust shall be awakened and summoned before the great tribunal, when Christ shall descend with a shout, a call, or command, like this here, *Come forth*, Ps. l. 4. *He shall call both to the heavens for their souls, and to the earth for their bodies, that he may judge his people.*

(2.) This loud call was but short, yet mighty through God to the battering down of the strongholds of the grave. [1.] He calls him by name, Lazarus, as we call those by their names whom we would awake out of a fast sleep. God said to Moses, as a mark of his favour, *I know thee by name*. The naming of him intimates that the same individual person that died shall rise again at the last day. He that calls the stars by their names can distinguish by name his stars that are in

the dust of the earth, and will lose none of them. [2.] He calls him out of the grave, speaking to him as if he were already alive, and had nothing to do but to come out of his grave. He does not say unto him, *Live*; for he himself must give life; but he saith to him, *Move*, for when by the grace of Christ we live spiritually we must stir up ourselves to *move*; the grave of sin and this world is no place for those whom Christ has quickened, and therefore they must *come forth*. [3.] The event was according to the intention: *He that was dead came forth*, v. 44. Power went along with the word of Christ to reunite the soul and body of Lazarus, and then he came forth. The miracle is described, not by its invisible springs, to satisfy our curiosity, but by its visible effects, to confirm our faith. Do any ask where the soul of Lazarus was during the four days of its separation? We are not told, but have reason to think it was in paradise, in joy and felicity; but you will say, "Was it not then really an unkindness to it to cause it to return into the prison of the body? And if it were, yet, being for the honour of Christ and the serving of the interests of his kingdom, it was no more an injury to him than it was to St. Paul to continue in the flesh when he knew that to depart to Christ was so much better. If any ask whether Lazarus, after he was raised, could give an account or description of his soul's removal out of the body or return to it, or what he saw in the other world, I suppose both those changes were so unaccountable to himself that he must say with Paul, *Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell*; and of what he saw and heard, that it was not lawful nor possible to express it. In a world of sense we cannot frame to ourselves, much less communicate to others, any adequate ideas of the world of spirits and the affairs of that world. Let us not covet to be wise above what is written, and this is all that is written concerning the resurrection of that Lazarus, that *he that was dead came forth*. Some have observed that though we read of many who were raised from the dead, who no doubt conversed familiarly with men afterwards, yet the scripture has not recorded one word spoken by any of them, except by our Lord Jesus only.

(3.) This miracle was wrought, [1.] *Speedily*. Nothing intervenes between the command, *Come forth*, and the effect, *He came forth*: dictum factum—no sooner said than done; let there be life, and there was life. Thus the change in the resurrection will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, 1 Cor. xv. 52. The almighty power that can do it can do it in an instant: *Then shalt thou call and I will answer*; will come at the call, as Lazarus, *Here am I*. [2.] *Perfectly*. He was so thoroughly revived that he got up out of his grave as strongly as ever he got up out of his bed, and returned not only to life, but health. He was not raised to serve a present



turn, but to live as other men. [3.] With this additional miracle, as some reckon it, that he came out of his grave, though he was fettered with his grave-clothes, with which he was *bound hand and foot*, and *his face bound about with a napkin* (for so the manner of the Jews was to bury); and he came forth in the same dress wherein he was buried, that it might appear that it was he himself and not another, and that he was not only alive, but strong, and able to walk, after a sort, even in his grave-clothes. The *binding of his face with a napkin* proved that he had been really dead, for otherwise, in less than so many days' time, that would have smothered him. And the standers-by, in unbinding him, would *handle him, and see him, that it was he himself*, and so be witnesses of the miracle. Now see here, *First*, How little we carry away with us, when we leave the world—only a winding-sheet and a coffin; there is no change of raiment in the grave, nothing but a single suit of grave-clothes. *Secondly*, What condition we shall be in in the grave. What *wisdom or device* can there be where the eyes are hoodwinked, or what working where the hands and feet are fettered? And so it will be in the grave, whether we are going. Lazarus being *come forth*, hampered and embarrassed with his grave-clothes, we may well imagine that those about the grave were exceedingly surprised and frightened at it; we should be so if we should see a dead body rise; but Christ, to make the thing familiar, sets them to work: "*Loose him, slacken his grave-clothes, that they may serve for day-clothes till he comes to his house, and then he will go himself, so clad, without guide or supporter to his own house.*" As, in the Old Testament, the translations of Enoch and Elias were sensible demonstrations of an invisible and future state, the one about the middle of the patriarchal age, the other of the Mosaic economy, so the resurrection of Lazarus, in the New Testament, was designed for the confirmation of the doctrine of the resurrection.

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. 46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. 47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48 If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. 49 And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye

know nothing at all, 50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. 53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. 54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. 55 And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show *it*, that they might take him.

We have here an account of the consequences of this glorious miracle, which were as usual; to some it was a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death.

I. Some were invited by it, and induced to believe. Many of the Jews, when they *saw the things that Jesus did, believed on him*, and well they might, for it was an incontestable proof of his divine mission. They had often heard of his miracles, and yet evaded the conviction of them, by calling in question the matter of fact; but now that they had themselves seen this done their unbelief was conquered, and they yielded at last. But *blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*. The more we see of Christ the more cause we shall see to love him and confide in him. These were some of those Jews that came to Mary, to comfort her. When we are doing good offices to others we put ourselves in the way of receiving favours from God, and have opportunities of getting good when we are doing good.

II. Others were irritated by it, and hardened in their unbelief.

1. The *informers* were so (v. 46): *Some of them*, who were eye-witnesses of the miracle, were so far from being convinced that they *went to the Pharisees*, whom they knew to

be his implacable enemies, and told them *what things Jesus had done*; not merely as a matter of news worthy their notice, much less as an inducement to them to think more favourably of Christ, but with a spiteful design to excite those who needed no spur the more vigorously to prosecute him. Here is a strange instance, (1.) Of a most *obstinate infidelity*, refusing to yield to the most powerful means of conviction; and it is hard to imagine how they could evade the force of this evidence, but that the *god of this world* had *blinded their minds*. (2.) Of a most *inveterate enmity*. If they would not be satisfied that he was to be believed in as the Christ, yet one would think they should have been mollified, and persuaded not to persecute him; but, if the water be not sufficient to *quench* the fire, it will *inflame* it. They told *what Jesus had done*, and told no more than what was true; but their malice gave a tincture of diabolism to their information equal to that of *lying*; perverting what is true is as bad as forging what is false. *Doeg* is called a *false, lying, and deceitful tongue* (Ps. lii. 2—4; cxv. 2, 3), though what he said was true.

2. The judges, the leaders, the *blind leaders*, of the people were no less exasperated by the report made to them, and here we are told what they did.

(1.) A special council is called and held (v. 47). *Then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council*, as was foretold, Ps. ii. 2, *The rulers take counsel together against the Lord*. Consultations of the sanhedrim were intended for the public good; but here, under colour of this, the greatest injury and mischief are done to the people. The things that belong to the nation's peace were hid from the eyes of those that were entrusted with its counsels. This council was called, not only for joint advice, but for mutual irritation; that as iron sharpens iron, and as coals are to burning coals and wood to fire, so they might exasperate and inflame one another with enmity and rage against Christ and his doctrine.

(2.) The case is proposed, and shown to be weighty and of great consequence.

[1.] The matter to be debated was what course they should take with this Jesus, to stop the growth of his interest; they said, *What do we? For this man doeth many miracles*. The information given about the raising of Lazarus was produced, and the *men, brethren, and fathers* were called in to help as solicitously as if a formidable enemy had been with an army in the heart of their country. *First*, They own the truth of Christ's miracles, and that he had wrought many of them; they are therefore witnesses against themselves, for they acknowledge his credentials and yet deny his commission. *Secondly*, They consider what is to be done, and chide themselves that they have not done something sooner effectually to crush

him. They do not take it at all into their consideration whether they shall not receive him, and own him as the Messiah, though they profess to expect him, and Jesus gave pregnant proofs of his being so; but they take it for granted that he is an enemy, and as such is to be run down: "*What do we? Have we no care to support our church? Is it nothing to us that a doctrine so destructive to our interest spreads thus? Shall we tamely yield up the ground we have got in the affections of the people? Shall we see our authority brought into contempt, and the craft by which we get our living ruined, and not bestir ourselves? What have we been doing all this while? And what are we now thinking of? Shall we be always talking, and bring nothing to pass?*"

[2.] That which made this matter weighty was the peril they apprehended their church and nation to be in from the Romans (v. 48): "*If we do not silence him, and take him off, all men will believe on him*; and, this being the setting up of a new king, the Romans will take umbrage at it, and *will come with an army, and take away our place and nation*, and therefore it is no time to trifle." See what an opinion they have,

*First*, Of their own *power*. They speak as if they thought Christ's progress and success in his work depended upon their connivance; as if he could not go on to work miracles, and make disciples, unless they *let him alone*; as if it were in their power to conquer him who had conquered death, or as if they could *fight against God*, and prosper. But he that sits in heaven laughs at the fond conceit which impotent malice has of its own omnipotence.

*Secondly*, Of their own *policy*. They fancy themselves to be men of mighty insight and foresight, and great sagacity in their moral prognostications.

*a*. They take on them to prophecy that, in a little time, if he have liberty to go on, *all men will believe on him*, hereby owning, when it was to serve their purpose, that his doctrine and miracles had a very convincing power in them, such as could not be resisted, but that all men would become his proselytes and votaries. Thus do they now make his interest formidable, though, to serve another turn, these same men strove to make it contemptible, ch. vii. 48, *Have any of the rulers believed on him?* This was the thing they were afraid of, that men would *believe on him*, and then all their measures were broken. Note, The success of the gospel is the dread of its adversaries; if souls be saved, they are undone.

*b*. They foretel that if the generality of the nation be *drawn after him*, the rage of the Romans will be *drawn upon them*. *They will come and take away our place*; the country in general, especially Jerusalem, or the temple, the *holy place*, and their place, their darling, their idol; or, their *preferment*:



in the temple, their *places* of power and trust. Now it was true that the Romans had a very jealous eye upon them, and knew they wanted nothing but power and opportunity to shake off their yoke. It was likewise true that if the Romans should pour an army in upon them it would be very hard for them to make any head against it; yet here appeared a cowardice which one would not have found in the priests of the Lord if they had not by their wickedness forfeited their interest in God and all good men. Had they kept their integrity, they needed not to have feared the Romans; but they speak like a dispirited people, as the men of Judah when they basely said to Samson, *Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us?* Judg. xv. 11. When men lose their piety they lose their courage. But, (a.) It was false that there was any danger of the Romans' being irritated against their nation by the progress of Christ's gospel, for it was no way *hurtful to kings nor provinces*, but highly beneficial. The Romans had no jealousy at all of his growing interest; for he taught men to give tribute to Cæsar, and not to *resist evil*, but to take up the cross. The Roman governor, at his trial, could find no fault in him. There was more danger of the Romans' being incensed against the Jewish nation by the priests than by Christ. Note, Pretended fears are often the colour of malicious designs. (b.) Had there really been some danger of displeasing the Romans by tolerating Christ's preaching, yet this would not justify their hating and persecuting a good man. Note, [a.] The enemies of Christ and his gospel have often coloured their enmity with a seeming care for the *public good* and the *common safety*, and, in order to this, have branded his prophets and ministers as troublers of Israel, and men that *turn the world upside down*. [b.] Carnal policy commonly sets up *reasons of state*, in opposition to *rules of justice*. When men are concerned for their own wealth and safety more than for truth and duty, it is wisdom from beneath, which is *earthly, sensual, and devilish*. But see what was the issue; they pretended to be afraid that their tolerating Christ's gospel would bring desolation upon them by the Romans, and therefore, *right or wrong*, set themselves against it; but it proved that their persecuting the gospel brought upon them that which they feared, filled up the measure of their iniquity, and the Romans came and *took away their place and nation*, and their place *knows them no more*. Note, That calamity which we seek to escape by sin we take the most effectual course to bring upon our own heads; and those who think by opposing Christ's kingdom to secure or advance their own secular interest will find Jerusalem a more *burdensome stone* than they think it is, Zech. xii. 3. *The fear of the wicked it shall come upon them*, Prov. x. 24.

(3.) Caiaphas makes a malicious but

mystical speech in the council on this occasion.

[1.] The *malice* of it appears evident at first view, v. 49, 50. He, being the high priest, and so president of the council, took upon him to decide the matter before it was debated: "*You know nothing at all*, your hesitating betrays your ignorance, for it is not a thing that will bear a dispute, it is soon determined, if you consider that received maxim, *That it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people*." Here,

First, The counsellor was Caiaphas, who was *high priest that same year*. The high priesthood was by divine appointment settled upon the heir male of the house of Aaron, for and during the term of his natural life, and then to his heir male; but in those degenerate times it was become, though not an annual office, like a consulship, yet frequently changed, as they could make an interest with the Roman powers. Now it happened that *this year* Caiaphas wore the mitre.

Secondly, The drift of the advice was, in short, this, That some way or other must be found out to put Jesus to death. We have reason to think that they strongly suspected him to be indeed the Messiah; but his doctrine was so contrary to their darling traditions and secular interest, and his design did so thwart their notions of the Messiah's kingdom, that they resolve, be he who he will, he must be put to death. Caiaphas does not say, Let him be silenced, imprisoned, banished, though amply sufficient for the *restraint* of one they thought dangerous; but *die he must*. Note, Those that have set themselves against Christianity have commonly divested themselves of humanity, and been infamous for cruelty.

Thirdly, This is plausibly insinuated, with all the subtlety as well as malice of the old serpent. 1. He suggests his own sagacity, which we must suppose him as high priest to excel in, though the *Urim and Thummim* were long since lost. How scornfully does he say, "*You know nothing*, who are but common priests; but you must give me leave to see further into things than you do!" Thus it is common for those in authority to impose their corrupt dictates by virtue of that; and, because they *should be* the wisest and best, to expect that every body should believe they *are so*. 2. He takes it for granted that the case is plain and past dispute, and that those are very ignorant who do not see it to be so. Note, Reason and justice are often run down with a high hand. *Truth is fallen in the streets*, and, when it is down, down with it; and *equity cannot enter*, and, when it is out, out with it, Isa. lix. 14. 3. He insists upon a maxim in politics, That the welfare of communities is to be preferred before that of particular persons. *It is expedient for us as priests*, whose all lies at stake, that *one man die for the people*. Thus far it holds true, that it is *expedient*, and more

than so, it is truly *honourable*, for a man to hazard his life in the service of his country (Phil. ii. 17; 1 John iii. 16); but to put an innocent man to death under colour of consulting the public safety is the devil's policy. Caiaphas craftily insinuates that the greatest and best man, though *major singulis*—*greater than any one individual*, is *minor universis*—*less than the collected mass*, and ought to think his life well spent, nay well lost, to save his country from ruin. But what is this to the murdering of one that was evidently a great blessing under pretence of preventing an imaginary mischief to the country? The case ought to have been put thus: Was it expedient for them to bring upon themselves and upon their nation the guilt of blood, a prophet's blood, for the securing of their civil interests from a danger which they had no just reason to be afraid of? Was it expedient for them to drive God and their glory from them, rather than venture the Romans' displeasure, who could do them no harm if they had God on their side? Note, Carnal policy, which steers only by secular considerations, while it thinks to *save all* by sin, ruins all at last.

[2.] The *mystery* that was in this counsel of Caiaphas does not appear at first view, but the evangelist leads us into it (v. 51, 52): *This spoke he not of himself*, it was not only the language of his own enmity and policy, but in these words he prophesied, though he himself was not aware of it, *that Jesus should die for that nation*. Here is a precious comment upon a pernicious text; the counsel of cursed Caiaphas so construed as to fall in with the counsels of the blessed God. Charity teaches us to put the most favourable construction upon men's words and actions that they will bear; but piety teaches us to make a good improvement of them, even contrary to that for which they were intended. If wicked men, in what they do against us, are *God's hand* to humble and reform us, why may they not in what they say against us be *God's mouth* to instruct and convince us? But in this of Caiaphas there was an extraordinary direction of Heaven prompting him to say that which was capable of a very sublime sense. As the hearts of all men are in God's hand, so are their tongues. Those are deceived who say, "*Our tongues are our own*," so that either we may say what we will, and are not accountable to God's judgment, or we can say what we will, and are not restrainable by his providence and power." Balaam could not say what he would, when he came to curse Israel, nor Laban when he pursued Jacob.

(4.) The evangelist explains and enlarges upon Caiaphas's words.

[1.] He explains what he said, and shows how it not only was, but was intended to be, accommodated to an excellent purpose. He did not *speak it of himself*. As it was an artifice to stir up the council against Christ,

he spoke it of himself, or of the devil rather; but as it was an *oracle*, declaring it the purpose and design of God by the death of Christ to save God's spiritual Israel from sin and wrath, he did not speak it of himself, for he knew nothing of the matter, he *meant not so*, neither did his heart think so, for nothing was in his heart but to destroy and cut off, Isa. x. 7.

*First*, He prophesied, and those that prophesied did not, in their prophesying, *speak of themselves*. But is Caiaphas also among the prophets? He is so, *pro hac vice*—*this once*, though a bad man, and an implacable enemy to Christ and his gospel. Note, 1. God can and often does make wicked men instruments to serve his own purposes, even contrary to their own intentions; for he has them not only *in a chain*, to restrain them from doing the mischief they would, but *in a bridle*, to lead them to do the service they would not. 2. Words of prophecy in the mouth are no infallible evidence of a principle of grace in the heart. *Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name?* will be rejected as a frivolous plea.

*Secondly*, He prophesied, *being high priest that year*; not that his being high priest did at all dispose or qualify him to be a prophet; we cannot suppose the pontifical mitre to have first inspired with prophecy the basest head that ever wore it; but, 1. Being high priest, and therefore of note and eminence in the conclave, God was pleased to put this significant word into his mouth rather than into the mouth of any other, that it might be the more observed or the non-observance of it the more aggravated. The apophthegms of great men have been thought worthy of special regard: *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king*; therefore this divine sentence was put into the lips of the high priest, that even out of his mouth this word might be established, That Christ died for *the good of the nation*, and not for *any iniquity in his hands*. He happened to be high priest that year which was fixed to be the *year of the redeemed*, when Messiah the prince must be cut off, but not for himself (Dan. ix. 26), and he must own it. 2. Being high priest that year, that famous year, in which there was to be such a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, more than had ever been yet, according to the prophecy (Joel ii. 28, 29, compared with Acts ii. 17), some drops of the blessed shower light upon Caiaphas, as the crumbs (says Dr Lightfoot) of the children's bread, which fall from the table among the dogs. This year was the year of the expiration of the Levitical priesthood; and out of the mouth of him who was that year high priest was extorted an implicit resignation of it to him who should not (as they had done for many ages) offer beasts for that nation, but offer himself, and so make an end of the *sin-offering*. This resignation he made *unwittingly*, as Isaac gave the blessing to Jacob



Thirdly, The matter of his prophecy was that Jesus should die for that nation, the very thing to which all the prophets bore witness, who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. i. 11), that the death of Christ must be the life and salvation of Israel; he meant by that nation those in it that obstinately adhered to Judaism, but God meant those in it that would receive the doctrine of Christ, and become followers of him, all believers, the spiritual seed of Abraham. The death of Christ, which Caiaphas was now projecting, proved the ruin of that interest in the nation of which he intended it should be the security and establishment, for it brought wrath upon them to the uttermost; but it proved the advancement of that interest of which he hoped it would have been the ruin, for Christ, being lifted up from the earth, drew all men unto him. It is a great thing that is here prophesied: That Jesus should die, die for others, not only for their good, but in their stead, die for that nation, for they had the first offer made them of salvation by his death. If the whole nation of the Jews had unanimously believed in Christ, and received his gospel, they had been not only saved eternally, but saved as a nation from their grievances. The fountain was first opened to the house of David, Zech. xiii. 1. He so died for that nation as that the whole nation should not perish, but that a remnant should be saved, Rom xi 5.

[2.] The evangelist enlarges upon this word of Caiaphas (v. 52), not for that nation only, how much soever it thought itself the darling of Heaven, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Observe here,

First, The persons Christ died for: Not for the nation of the Jews only (it would have been comparatively but a light thing for the Son of God to go through so vast an undertaking only to restore the preserved of Jacob, and the outcasts of Israel); no, he must be salvation to the ends of the earth, Isa. xlix. 6. He must die for the children of God that were scattered abroad. 1. Some understand it of the children of God that were then in being, scattered abroad in the Gentile world, devout men of every nation (Acts ii. 5), that feared God (Acts x. 2), and worshipped him (Acts xvii. 4), proselytes of the gate, who served the God of Abraham, but submitted not to the ceremonial law of Moses, persons that had a savour of natural religion, but were dispersed in the nations, had no solemn assemblies of their own, nor any peculiar profession to unite in or distinguish themselves by. Now Christ died to incorporate these in one great society, to be denominated from him and governed by him; and this was the setting up of a standard, to which all that had a regard to God and a concern for their souls might have recourse, and under which they might enlist themselves. 2. Others take in with these all that belong to the election of grace, who are called the children of God,

though not yet born, because they are predestinated to the adoption of children, Eph. i. 5. Now these are scattered abroad in several places of the earth, out of all kindreds and tongues (Rev. vii. 9), and in several ages of the world, to the end of time; there are those that fear him throughout all generations, to all these he had an eye in the atonement he made by his blood; as he prayed, so he died, for all that should believe on him.

Secondly, The purpose and intention of his death concerning those persons; he died to gather in those who wandered, and to gather together in one those who were scattered; to invite those to him who were at a distance from him, and to unite those in him who were at a distance from each other. Christ's dying is, 1. The great attractive of our hearts; for this end he is lifted up, to draw men to him. The conversion of souls is the gathering of them in to Christ as their ruler and refuge, as the doves to their windows; and he died to effect this. By dying he purchased them to himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost for them; his love in dying for us is the great loadstone of our love. 2. The great centre of our unity. He gathers them together in one, Eph. i. 10. They are one with him, one body, one spirit, and one with each other in him. All the saints in all places and ages meet in Christ, as all the members in the head, and all the branches in the root. Christ by the merit of his death recommended all the saints in one to the grace and favour of God (Heb. ii. 11—13), and by the motive of his death recommends them all severally to the love and affection one of another, ch. xiii. 34.

(5.) The result of this debate is a resolve of the council to put Jesus to death (v. 53): From that day they took counsel together, to put him to death. They now understood one another's minds, and so each was fixed in his own, that Jesus must die; and, it should seem, a committee was appointed to sit, *de die in diem*—daily, to consider of it, to consult about it, and to receive proposals for effecting it. Note, The wickedness of the wicked ripens by degrees, James i. 15; Ezek. vii. 10. Two considerable advances were now made in their accursed design against Christ. [1.] What before they had thought of severally now they jointly concurred in, and so strengthened the hands one of another in this wickedness, and proceeded with the greater assurance. Evil men confirm and encourage themselves and one another in evil practices, by comparing notes; men of corrupt minds bless themselves when they find others of the same mind: then the wickedness which before seemed impracticable appears not only possible, but easy to be effected, *vis unita fortior*—energies, when united, become more efficient. [2.] What before they wished done, but wanted a colour for, now they are furnished with a plausible pretence to justify themselves in, which will serve, if not to take off the guilt (that is the least of their care),

vet to take off the odium, and so satisfy, if not the personal, yet the political conscience, as some subtly distinguish. Many will go on very securely in doing an evil thing as long as they have but something to say in excuse for it. Now this resolution of theirs to put him to death, right or wrong, proves that all the formality of a trial, which he afterwards underwent, was but show and pretence; they were before determined what to do.

(6.) Christ hereupon absconded, knowing very well what was the vote of their close cabal, v. 54.

[1.] He suspended his public appearances: *He walked no more openly among the Jews*, among the inhabitants of Judea, who were properly called Jews, especially those at Jerusalem; *ὁὐ περιπατεῖ—he did not walk up and down among them*, did not go from place to place, preaching and working miracles with the freedom and openness that he had done, but while he staid in Judea, he was there *incognito*. Thus the chief priests put the light of Israel under a bushel.

[2.] He withdrew into an obscure part of the country, so obscure that the name of the town he retired to is scarcely met with any where else. He went to a country *near the wilderness*, as if he were driven out from among men, or rather wishing, with Jeremiah, that he might have in the wilderness a *lodging place of way-faring men*, Jer. ix. 2. He entered into a city called Ephraim, some think Ephratah, that is, Bethlehem, where he was born, and which bordered upon the wilderness of Judah; others think Ephron, or Ephraim, mentioned 2 Chron. xiii. 19. Thither his disciples went with him; neither would they leave him in solitude, nor would he leave them in danger. There he continued, *διετριβε*, there he *conversed*, he knew how to improve this time of retirement in private conversation, when he had not an opportunity of preaching publicly. He *conversed with his disciples*, who were his family, when he was forced from the temple, and his *διὰτριβαι*, or discourses there, no doubt, were very edifying. We must do the good we can, when we cannot do the good we would. But why would Christ abscond now? It was not because he either feared the power of his enemies or distrusted his own power; he had many ways to save himself, and was neither averse to suffering nor unprepared for it; but he retired, *First*, To put a mark of his displeasure upon Jerusalem and the people of the Jews. They rejected him and his gospel; justly therefore did he remove himself and his gospel from them. The prince of teachers was now *removed into a corner* (Isa. xxx. 20); there was *no open vision* of him; and it was a sad presage of that thick darkness which was shortly to come upon Jerusalem, because she knew not the day of her visitation. *Secondly*, To render the cruelty of his enemies against

him the more inexcusable. If that which was grievous to them, and thought dangerous to the public, was his *public appearance*, he would try whether their anger would be turned away by his retirement into privacy; when David had fled to Gath, Saul was satisfied, and sought no more for him, 1 Sam. xxvii. 4. But it was the *life*, the precious life, that these wicked men hunted after. *Thirdly*, His hour was *not yet come*, and therefore he declined danger, and did it in a way common to men, both to warrant and encourage the flight of his servants in time of persecution and to comfort those who are forced from their usefulness, and buried alive in privacy and obscurity; *the disciple is not better than his Lord*. *Fourthly*, His retirement, for awhile, was to make his return into Jerusalem, when his hour was come, the more remarkable and illustrious. This swelled the acclamations of joy with which his well-wishers welcomed him at his next public appearance, when he rode triumphantly into the city.

(7.) The strict enquiry made for him during his recess, v. 55—57.

[1.] The occasion of it was the approach of the passover, at which they expected his presence, according to custom (v. 55): *The Jews' passover was nigh at hand*, a festival which shone bright in their calendar, and which there was great expectation of for some time before. This was Christ's fourth and last passover, since he entered upon his public ministry, and it might truly be said (as, 2. Chron. xxxv. 18), *There never was such a passover in Israel*, for in it *Christ our passover was sacrificed for us*. Now the passover being at hand, *many went out of all parts of the country to Jerusalem, to purify themselves*. This was either, *First*, A necessary purification of those who had contracted any ceremonial pollution; they came to be sprinkled with the *water of purification*, and to perform the other rites of cleansing according to the law, for they might not eat the passover in their uncleanness, Num. ix. 6. Thus before our gospel passover we must renew our repentance, and by faith wash in the blood of Christ, and so *compass God's altar*. Or, *Secondly*, A voluntary purification, or self-sequestration, by fasting and prayer, and other religious exercises, which many that were more devout than their neighbours spent some time in before the passover, and chose to do it at Jerusalem, because of the advantage of the temple-service. Thus must we by solemn preparation set bounds about the mount on which we expect to meet with God.

[2.] The enquiry was very solicitous. *They said, What think you, that he will not come to the feast?* v. 56.

*First*, Some think this was said by those who wished well to him, and expected his coming, that they might hear his doctrine and see his miracles. Those who came early out of



the country, that they might purify themselves, were very desirous to meet with Christ, and perhaps came up the sooner with that expectation, and therefore *as they stood in the temple*, the place of their purification, they enquired what news of Christ? Could any body give them hopes of seeing him? If there were those, and those of the most devout people, and best affected to religion, who showed this respect to Christ, it was a check to the enmity of the chief priests, and a witness against them.

*Secondly*, It should rather seem that they were his enemies who made this enquiry after him, who wished for an opportunity to lay hands on him. They, seeing the town begin to fill with devout people out of the country, wondered they did not find him among them. When they should have been assisting those that came to purify themselves, according to the duty of their place, they were plotting against Christ. How miserably degenerate was the Jewish church, when the priests of the Lord were become like the priests of the calves, a *snare upon Mizpeh*, and a *net spread upon Tabor*, and were *profound to make slaughter* (Hos. v. 1, 2),—when, instead of keeping the feast with unleavened bread, they were themselves soured with the leaven of the worst malice! Their asking, *What think you? Will he not come up to the feast?* implies, 1. An invidious reflection upon Christ, as if he would omit his attendance on the feast of the Lord for fear of exposing himself. If others, through irreligion, be absent, they are not animadverted upon; but if Christ be absent, for his own preservation (for God will have mercy, and not sacrifice), it is turned to his reproach, as it was to David's that his seat was empty at the feast, though Saul wanted him only that he might have an opportunity of nailing him to the wall with his javelin, 1 Sam. xx. 25—27, &c. It is sad to see holy ordinances prostituted to such unholy purposes. 2. A fearful apprehension that they had of missing their game: "*Will he not come up to the feast?*" If he do not, our measures are broken, and we are all undone; for there is no sending a pursuivant into the country, to fetch him up."

[3.] The orders issued out by the government for the apprehending of him were very strict, v. 57. The great sanhedrim issued out a proclamation, strictly charging and requiring that if any person in city or country *knew where he was* (pretending that he was a criminal, and had fled from justice) they should show it, that he might be taken, probably promising a reward to any that would discover him, and imposing a penalty on such as harboured him; so that hereby he was represented to the people as an obnoxious dangerous man, an outlaw, whom any one might have a blow at. Saul issued out such a proclamation for the apprehending of David, and Ahab of Elijah. See, *First*, How

intent they were upon this prosecution, and how indefatigably they laboured in it, now at a time when, if they had had any sense of religion and the duty of their function, they would have found something else to do. *Secondly*, How willing they were to involve others in the guilt with them; if any man were capable of betraying Christ, they would have him think himself bound to do it. Thus was the interest they had in the people abused to the worst purposes. Note, It is an aggravation of the sins of wicked rulers that they commonly make those that are under them instruments of their unrighteousness. But notwithstanding this proclamation, though doubtless many knew where he was, yet such was his interest in the affections of some, and such God's hold of the consciences of others, that he continued undiscovered, for the *Lord hid him*.

## CHAP. XII.

It was a melancholy account which we had in the close of the foregoing chapter of the dishonour done to our Lord Jesus, when the scribes and Pharisees proclaimed him a traitor to their church, and put upon him all the marks of ignominy they could: but the story of this chapter balances that, by giving us an account of the honour done to the Redeemer, notwithstanding all that reproach thrown upon him. Thus the one was set over against the other. Let us see what honours were heaped on the head of the Lord Jesus, even in the depths of his humiliation. 1. Mary did him honour, by anointing his feet at the supper in Bethany, ver. 1—11. 2. The common people did him honour, with their acclamations of joy, when he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, ver. 12—19. 3. The Greeks did him honour, by enquiring after him with a longing desire to see him, ver. 20—26. 4. God the Father did him honour, by a voice from heaven, bearing testimony to him, ver. 27—36. 5. He had honour done him by the Old Testament prophets, who foretold the infidelity of those that heard the report of him, ver. 37—41. 6. He had honour done him by some of the chief rulers, whose consciences witnessed for him, though they had not courage to own it, ver. 42, 43. 7. He claimed honour to himself, by asserting his divine mission, and the account he gave of his errand into the world, ver. 44—50.

**T**HEN Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. 2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. 3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. 4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. 7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. 8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. 9 Much

people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there : and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death ; 11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

In these verses we have,

1. *The kind visit* our Lord Jesus paid to his friends at Bethany, *v. 1.* He came up out of the country, *six days before the passover*, and took up at Bethany, a town which, according to the computation of our metropolis, lay so near Jerusalem as to be within the bills of mortality. He lodged here with his friend Lazarus, whom he had lately *raised from the dead*. His coming to Bethany now may be considered,

1. As a preface to the passover he intended to celebrate, to which reference is made in assigning the date of his coming : *Six days before the passover*. Devout men set time apart before, to prepare themselves for that solemnity, and thus it became our Lord Jesus to *fulfil all righteousness*. Thus he has set us an example of solemn self-sequestration, before the solemnities of the gospel passover ; let us hear the voice crying, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*.

2. As a voluntary exposing of himself to the fury of his enemies ; now that his hour was at hand he came within their reach, and freely offered himself to them, though he had shown them how easily he could evade all their snares. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus was voluntary in his sufferings ; his life was not *forced* from him, but *resigned* : *Lo, I come*. As the strength of his persecutors could not overpower him, so their subtlety could not surprise him, but he died because he would. (2.) As there is a time when we are allowed to shift for our own preservation, so there is a time when we are called to hazard our lives in the cause of God, as St. Paul, when he *went bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem*.

3. As an instance of his kindness to his friends at Bethany, whom he loved, and from whom he was shortly to be taken away. This was a farewell visit ; he came to take leave of them, and to leave with them words of comfort against the day of trial that was approaching. Note, Though Christ depart for a time from his people, he will give them intimations that he departs in love, and not in anger. Bethany is here described to be the town *where Lazarus was, whom he raised from the dead*. The miracle wrought here put a new honour upon the place, and made it remarkable. Christ came hither to observe what improvement was made of this miracle ;

for where Christ works wonders, and shows signal favours, he looks after them, to see whether the intention of them be answered. Where he has sown plentifully, he observes whether it comes up again.

II. *The kind entertainment* which his friends there gave him : They *made him a supper* (*v. 2*), a great supper, a feast. It is queried whether this was the same with that which is recorded, Matt. xxvi. 6, &c., in the house of Simon. Most commentators think it was ; for the substance of the story and many of the circumstances agree ; but that comes in after what was said *two days* before the passover, whereas this was done *six days* before ; nor is it likely that Martha should serve in any house but her own ; and therefore I incline with Dr. Lightfoot to think them different : that in Matthew on the third day of the passover week, but this the seventh day of the week before, being the Jewish sabbath, the night before he rode in triumph into Jerusalem ; that in the house of Simon ; this of Lazarus. These two being the most public and solemn entertainments given him in Bethany, Mary probably graced them *both* with this token of her respect ; and what she *left* of her ointment this first time, when she spent but a *pound* of it (*v. 3*), she used that second time, when she *poured it all out*, Mark xiv. 3. Let us see the account of this entertainment.

1. They *made him a supper* ; for with them, ordinarily, supper was the best meal. This they did in token of their respect and gratitude, for a feast is made for *friendship* ; and that they might have an opportunity of free and pleasant conversation with him, for a feast is made for *fellowship*. Perhaps it is in allusion to this and the like entertainments given to Christ in the days of his flesh that he promises, to such as open the door of their hearts to him, that he will *sup with them*, Rev. iii. 20. 2. Martha *served* ; she herself waited at table, in token of her great respect to the Master. Though a person of some quality, she did not think it below her to *serve*, when Christ sat at meat ; nor should we think it a dishonour or disparagement to us to stoop to any service whereby Christ may be honoured. Christ had formerly reproved Martha for being *troubled with much serving*. But she did not therefore leave off serving, as some, who, when they are reproved for one extreme, peevishly run into another ; no, still she *served* ; not as then at a distance, but *within hearing* of Christ's gracious words, reckoning those happy who, as the queen of Sheba said concerning Solomon's servants, stood continually before him, to hear his wisdom ; better be a *waiter* at Christ's table than a *guest* at the table of a prince. 3. Lazarus was *one of those that sat at meat*. It proved the truth of his resurrection, as it did of Christ's, that there were those who did *eat and drink with him*, Acts x. 41. Lazarus did not retire into a *wilderness* after his resurrection, as if, when



he had made a visit to the other world, he must ever after be a hermit in this; no, he conversed familiarly with people, as others did. He *sat at meat*, as a monument of the miracle Christ had wrought. Those whom Christ has *raised up* to a spiritual life are made to *sit together with him*. See Eph. ii. 5, 6.

III. The particular respect which Mary showed him, above the rest, in anointing his feet with sweet ointment, v. 3. She had a *pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly*, which probably she had by her for her own use; but the death and resurrection of her brother had quite weaned her from the use of all such things, and with this she *anointed the feet of Jesus*, and, as a further token of her reverence for him and negligence of herself, she *wiped them with her hair*, and this was taken notice of by all that were present, *for the house was filled with the odour of the ointment*. See Prov. xxvii. 16.

1. Doubtless she intended this as a token of her love to Christ, who had given real tokens of his love to her and her family; and thus she studies what she shall render. Now by this her love to Christ appears to have been, (1.) A *generous love*; so far from sparing necessary charges in his service, she is as ingenious to *create* an occasion of expense in religion as most are to avoid it. If she had any thing more valuable than another, that must be brought out for the honour of Christ. Note, Those who love Christ truly love him so much better than this world as to be willing to lay out the best they have for him. (2.) A *condescending love*; she not only bestowed her ointment upon Christ, but with her own hands poured it upon him, which she might have ordered one of her servants to have done; nay, she did not, as usual, anoint his *head* with it; but his *feet*. True love, as it does not spare charges, so it does not spare pains, in honouring Christ. Considering what Christ has done and suffered for us, we are very ungrateful if we think any service too hard to do, or too mean to stoop to, whereby he may *really* be glorified. (3.) A *believing love*; there was faith working by this love, faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed, who, being both priest and king, was anointed as Aaron and David were. Note, *God's Anointed* should be *our Anointed*. Has God poured on him the oil of gladness above his fellows? Let us pour on him the ointment of our best affections above all competitors. By consenting to Christ as *our king*, we must comply with God's designs, appointing him *our head* whom he has appointed, Hos. i. 11.

2. The *filling of the house* with the pleasant *odour of the ointment* may intimate to us, (1.) That those who entertain Christ in their hearts and houses bring a sweet odour into them; Christ's presence brings with it an ointment and *perfume which rejoice the heart*. (2.) Honours done to Christ are comforts to

all his friends and followers; they are to God and good men an offering of a *sweet-smelling savour*.

IV. Judas's dislike of Mary's compliment, or token of her respect to Christ, v. 4, 5, where observe,

1. The person that carped at it was Judas, *one of his disciples*; not one of their nature, but only one of their number. It is possible for the worst of men to lurk under the disguise of the best profession; and there are many who pretend to stand in relation to Christ who really have no kindness for him. Judas was an apostle, a preacher of the gospel, and yet one that discouraged and checked this instance of pious affection and devotion. Note, It is sad to see the life of religion and holy zeal frowned upon and discountenanced by such as are bound by their office to assist and encourage it. But this was he that should *betray Christ*. Note, Coldness of love to Christ, and a secret contempt of serious piety, when they appear in professors of religion, are sad presages of a final apostasy. Hypocrites, by less instances of worldliness, discover themselves to be ready for a compliance with greater temptations.

2. The pretence with which he covered his dislike (v. 5): "*Why was not this ointment, since it was designed for a pious use, sold for three hundred pence*" (8l. 10s. of our money), "*and given to the poor*?" (1.) Here is a foul iniquity gilded over with a specious and plausible pretence, for Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. (2.) Here is worldly wisdom passing a censure upon pious zeal, as guilty of imprudence and mismanagement. Those who value themselves upon their *secular policy*, and undervalue others for their *serious piety*, have more in them of the spirit of Judas than they would be thought to have. (3.) Here is charity to the poor made a colour for opposing a piece of piety to Christ, and secretly made a cloak for covetousness. Many excuse themselves from *laying out* in charity under pretence of *laying up* for charity: whereas, if the clouds be full of rain, they will *empty themselves*. Judas asked, *Why was it not given to the poor*? To which it is easy to answer, Because it was better bestowed upon the Lord Jesus. Note, We must not conclude that those do no acceptable piece of service who do not do it in our way, and just as we would have them; as if every thing must be adjudged imprudent and unfit which does not take its measures from us and our sentiments. Proud men think all ill-advised who do not advise with them.

3. The detection and discovery of Judas's hypocrisy herein, v. 6. Here is the evangelist's remark upon it, by the direction of him who *searches the heart*: *This he said, not that he cared for the poor*, as he pretended, *but because he was a thief, and had the bag*.

(1.) It did not come from a principle of charity: *Not that he cared for the poor*. He



had no compassion towards them, no concern for them: what were the poor to him any further than he might serve his own ends by being overseer of the poor? Thus some warmly contend for the *power* of the church, as others for its *purity*, when perhaps it may be said, Not that they care for the church; it is all one to them whether its *true interest* sink or swim, but under the pretence of this they are advancing themselves. Simeon and Levi pretended zeal for circumcision, *not that they cared* for the seal of the covenant, any more than Jehu for the Lord of hosts, when he said, *Come see my zeal*.

(2.) It did come from a principle of covetousness. The truth of the matter was, this ointment being designed for his Master, he would rather have had it in money, to be put in the common stock with which he was entrusted, and then he knew what to do with it. Observe,

[1.] Judas was treasurer of Christ's household, whence some think he was called *Is-carriot*, the *bag-bearer*. First, See what *estate* Jesus and his disciples had to live upon. It was but *little*; they had neither farms nor merchandise, neither barns nor storehouses, only a *bag*; or, as some think the word signifies, a *box*, or *coffer*, wherein they kept just enough for their subsistence, giving the overplus, if any were, to the poor; this they carried about with them, wherever they went. *Omnia mea mecum porto—I carry all my property about me*. This bag was supplied by the contributions of good people, and the Master and his disciples had all *in common*; let this lessen our esteem of worldly wealth, and deaden us to the punctilios of state and ceremony, and reconcile us to a mean and despicable way of living, if this be our lot, that it was our Master's lot; for our sakes he *became poor*. Secondly, See who was the *steward* of the little they had; it was Judas, he was purse-bearer. It was his office to receive and pay, and we do not find that he gave any account what markets he made. He was appointed to this office, either, 1. Because he was the least and lowest of all the disciples; it was not Peter nor John that was made steward (though it was a place of trust and profit), but Judas, the meanest of them. Note, Secular employments, as they are a digression, so they are a degradation to a minister of the gospel; see 1 Cor. vi. 4. The prime-ministers of state in Christ's kingdom refused to be concerned in the revenue, Acts vi. 2. 2. Because he was desirous of the place. He loved in his heart to be *fingering money*, and therefore had the money-bag committed to him, either, (1.) As a kindness, to please him, and thereby oblige him to be true to his Master. Subjects are sometimes disaffected to the government because disappointed of their preferment; but Judas had no cause to complain of this; the bag he chose, and the bag he had. Or, (2.) In judgment upon him, to punish him for his secret

wickedness; that was put into his hands which would be a snare and trap to him. Note, Strong inclinations to sin within are often justly punished with strong temptations to sin without. We have little reason to be fond of the bag, or proud of it, for at the best we are but stewards of it; and it was Judas, one of an ill character, and born to be hanged (pardon the expression), that was steward of the bag. *The prosperity of fools destroys them*.

[2.] Being trusted with the bag, he was a *thief*, that is, he had a thievish disposition. The reigning love of money is *heart-theft* as much as anger and revenge are *heart-murder*. Or perhaps he had been really guilty of embezzling his Master's stores, and converting to his own use what was given to the public stock. And some conjecture that he was now contriving to fill his pockets, and then run away and leave his Master, having heard him speak so much of troubles approaching, to which he could by no means reconcile himself. Note, Those to whom the management and disposal of public money is committed have need to be governed by steady principles of justice and honesty, that no blot cleave to their hands; for though some make a jest of cheating the government, or the church, or the country, if cheating be *thieving*, and, communities being more considerable than particular persons, if robbing them be the greater sin, the guilt of theft and the portion of thieves will be found no jesting matter. Judas, who had betrayed his trust, soon after betrayed his Master.

V Christ's justification of what Mary did (v. 7, 8). *Let her alone*. Hereby he intimated his acceptance of her kindness (though he was perfectly mortified to all the delights of sense, yet, as it was a token of her goodwill, he signified himself well-pleased with it), and his care that she should not be molested in it: *Pardon her*, so it may be read; "excuse her this once, if it be an error it is an error of her love." Note, Christ would not have those censured nor discouraged who sincerely design to please him, though in their honest endeavours there be not all the discretion that may be, Rom. xiv. 3. Though we would not do as they do, yet *let them alone*. For Mary's justification,

1. Christ puts a favourable construction upon what she did, which those that condemned it were not aware of: *Against the day of my burying she has kept this*. Or, *She has reserved this for the day of my embalming*; so Dr. Hammond. "You do not grudge the ointment used for the embalming of your dead friends, nor say that it should be sold, and given to the poor. Now this anointing either was so *intended*, or at least may be so *interpreted*; for the day of my burying is now at hand, and she has anointed a body that is already as *good as dead*." Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus thought much and often of his own death and burial; it



would be good for us to do so too. (2.) Providence does often so open a door of opportunity to good Christians, and the Spirit of grace does so open their hearts, that the expressions of their pious zeal prove to be more *seasonable*, and more *beautiful*, than any foresight of their own could make them. (3.) The grace of Christ puts kind comments upon the pious words and actions of good people, and not only makes the best of what is amiss, but makes the most of what is good.

2. He gives a sufficient answer to Judas's objection, v. 8. (1.) It is so ordered in the kingdom of Providence that *the poor we have always with us*, some or other that are proper objects of charity (Deut. xv. 11); such there will be as long as there are in this lapsed state of mankind so much folly and so much affliction. (2.) It is so ordered in the kingdom of grace that the church should not always have the bodily presence of Jesus Christ: "*Me you have not always*, but only now for a little time." Note, We need wisdom, when two duties come in competition, to know which to give the preference to, which must be determined by the circumstances. Opportunities are to be improved, and those opportunities first and most vigorously which are likely to be of the shortest continuance, and which we see most speedily hastening away. That good duty which may be done *at any time* ought to give way to that which cannot be done but *just now*.

VI. The public notice which was taken of our Lord Jesus here at this supper in Bethany (v. 9): *Much people of the Jews knew that he was there*, for he was the talk of the town, and *they came flocking thither*; the more because he had lately absconded, and now broke out as the sun from behind a dark cloud. 1. They came to see Jesus, whose name was very much magnified, and made considerable by the late miracle he had wrought in raising Lazarus. They came, not to hear him, but to gratify their curiosity with a sight of him here at Bethany, fearing he would not appear publicly, as he used to do, this passover. They came, not to seize him, or inform against him, though the government had prosecuted him to an outlawry, but to see him, and show him respect. Note, There are some in whose affections Christ will have an interest, in spite of all the attempts of his enemies to misrepresent him. It being known where Christ was, multitudes came to him. Note, Where the king is there is the court; where Christ is there will the *gathering of the people be*, Luke xvii. 37. 2. They came to see Lazarus and Christ together, which was a very inviting sight. Some came for the confirmation of their faith in Christ, to have the story perhaps from Lazarus's own mouth. Others came only for the gratifying of their curiosity, that they might say they had seen a man who had been dead and buried, and yet lived again;

so that Lazarus served for a *show*, these holy-days, to those who, like the Athenians, spent their time in telling and hearing new things. Perhaps some came to put curious questions to Lazarus about the state of the dead, to ask what news from the other world; we ourselves have sometimes said, it may be, We would have gone a great way for one hour's discourse with Lazarus. But if any came on this errand it is probable that Lazarus was silent, and gave them no account of his voyage; at least, the scripture is silent, and gives us no account of it; and we must not covet to be wise above what is written. But our Lord Jesus was present, who was a much fitter person for them to apply to than Lazarus; for if we hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, if we heed not what they tell us concerning another world, neither should we be persuaded though Lazarus rose from the dead. We have a more sure word of prophecy.

VII. The indignation of the chief priests at the growing interest of our Lord Jesus, and their plot to crush it (v. 10, 11): *They consulted* (or decreed) *how they might put Lazarus also to death*, because that *by reason of him* (of what was done to him, not of any thing he said or did) *many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus*. Here observe,

1. How vain and unsuccessful their attempts against Christ had hitherto been. They had done all they could to alienate the people from him, and exasperate them against him, and yet many of the Jews, their neighbours, their creatures, their admirers, were so overcome by the convincing evidence of Christ's miracles that they *went away* from the interest and party of the priests, went off from obedience to their tyranny, and *believed on Jesus*; and it was by reason of Lazarus; his resurrection put life into their faith, and convinced them that this Jesus was undoubtedly the Messiah, and had life in himself, and power to give life. This miracle confirmed them in the belief of his other miracles, which they had heard he wrought in Galilee: what was impossible to him that could raise the dead?

2. How absurd and unreasonable this day's vote was—that Lazarus must be put to death. This is an instance of the most brutish rage that could be; they were like a *wild bull in a net*, full of fury, and laying about them without any consideration. It was a sign that they *neither feared God nor regarded man*. For, (1.) If they had feared God, they would not have done such an act of defiance to him. God will have Lazarus to live by miracle, and they will have him to die by malice. They cry, *Away with such a fellow, it is not fit he should live*, when God had so lately sent him back to the earth, declaring it highly fit he should live; what was this but *walking contrary to God*? They would put Lazarus to death, and challenge almighty power to raise him again, as if they could

contend with God, and try titles with the King of kings. Who has the keys of death and the grave, he or they? *O cæca malitia! Christus qui suscitare potuit mortuum, non possit occisum.*—Blind malice, to suppose that Christ, who could raise one that had died a natural death, could not raise one that had been slain!—Augustine in loc. Lazarus is singled out to be the object of their special hatred, because God has distinguished him by the tokens of his peculiar love, as if they had made a league offensive and defensive with death and hell, and resolved to be severe upon all deserters. One would think that they should rather have consulted how they might have joined in friendship with Lazarus and his family, and by their mediation have reconciled themselves to this Jesus whom they had persecuted; but the god of this world had *blinded their minds*. (2.) If they had regarded man, they would not have done such an act of injustice to Lazarus, an innocent man, to whose charge they could not pretend to lay any crime. What bands are strong enough to hold those who can so easily break through the most sacred ties of common justice, and violate the maxims which even nature itself teaches? But the support of their own tyranny and superstition was thought sufficient, as in the church of Rome, not only to justify, but to consecrate the greatest villainies, and make them meritorious.

12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. 14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, 15 Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. 16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him. 17 The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. 18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. 19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

This story of Christ's riding in triumph to Jerusalem is recorded by all the evangelists, as worthy of special remark; and in it we may observe,

I. The respect that was paid to our Lord Jesus by the common people, v. 12, 13, where we are told,

1. Who they were that paid him this respect: *much people, ὄχλος πολλός*—a great crowd of those that came up to the feast; not the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but the country people that came from remote parts to worship at the feast; the nearer the temple of the Lord, the further from the Lord of the temple. They were such as *came up to the feast*. (1.) Perhaps they had been Christ's hearers in the country, and great admirers of him there, and therefore were forward to testify their respect to him at Jerusalem, where they knew he had many enemies. Note, Those that have a true value and veneration for Christ will neither be ashamed nor afraid to own him before men in any instance whereby they may do him honour. (2.) Perhaps they were those more *devout Jews* that came up to the feast some time before, to purify themselves, that were more inclined to religion than their neighbours, and these were they that were so forward to honour Christ. Note, The more regard men have to God and religion in general, the better disposed they will be to entertain Christ and his religion, which is not destructive but perfective of all previous discoveries and institutions. They were not the rulers, nor the great men, that went out to meet Christ, but the commonalty; some would have called them a mob, a rabble: but Christ has chosen the weak and foolish things (1 Cor. i. 27), and is honoured more by the multitude than by the magnificence of his followers; for he values men by their souls, not their names and titles of honour.

2. On what occasion they did it: *They heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem*. They had enquired for him (*ch. xi. 55, 56*) *Will he not come up to the feast?* And now they hear he is coming; for none that seek Christ seek in vain. Now when they heard he was coming, they bestirred themselves, to give him an agreeable reception. Note, Tidings of the approach of Christ and his kingdom should awaken us to consider what is the work of the day, that it may be done in the day. Israel must prepare to meet *their God* (Amos iv. 12), and the virgins to meet *the bridegroom*.

3. In what way they expressed their respect; they had not the keys of the city to present to him, nor the sword nor mace to carry before him, none of the city music to compliment him with, but such as they had they gave him; and even this despicable crowd was a faint resemblance of that glorious company which John saw *before the throne, and before the Lamb*, Rev. vii. 9, 10. Though these were not before the throne.



they were before the Lamb, the paschal Lamb, who now, according to the usual ceremony, four days before the feast, was set apart to be sacrificed for us. There it is said of that celestial choir,

(1.) That they had palms in their hands, and so had these *branches of palm-trees*. The palm-tree has ever been an emblem of victory and triumph; Cicero calls one that had won many prizes *plurimarum palmarum homo—a man of many palms*. Christ was now by his death to conquer principalities and powers, and therefore it was fit that he should have the victor's palm borne before him; though he was but girding on the harness, yet he could boast as though he had put it off. But this was not all; the carrying of palm-branches was part of the ceremony of the feast of tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 40; Neh. viii. 15), and their using this expression of joy in the welcome given to our Lord Jesus intimates that all the feasts pointed at his gospel, had their accomplishment in it, and particularly that of the feast of tabernacles, Zech. xiv. 16.

(2.) That they *cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God* (Rev. vii. 10); so did these here, they shouted before him, as is usual in popular welcomes, *Hosanna, blessed is the king of Israel, that comes in the name of the Lord*; and *hosanna* signifies *salvation*. It is quoted from Ps. cxviii. 25, 26. See how well acquainted these common people were with the scripture, and how pertinently they apply it to the Messiah. High thoughts of Christ will be best expressed in scripture-words. Now in their acclamations, [1.] They acknowledge our Lord Jesus to be the king of Israel, that comes *in the name of the Lord*. Though he went now in poverty and disgrace, yet, contrary to the notions their scribes had given them of the Messiah, they own him to be a king, which bespeaks both his dignity and honour, which we must adore; and his dominion and power, to which we must submit. They own him to be, *First*, A rightful king, coming *in the name of the Lord* (Ps. ii. 6), sent of God, not only as a prophet, but as a king. *Secondly*, The promised and long-expected king, Messiah the prince, for he is *king of Israel*. According to the light they had, they proclaimed him king of Israel in the streets of Jerusalem; and, they themselves being Israelites, hereby they avouched him for their king. [2.] They heartily wish well to his kingdom, which is the meaning of *hosanna*; let the king of Israel prosper, as when Solomon was crowned they cried, *God save king Solomon*, 1 Kings i. 39. In crying *hosanna* they prayed for three things—*First*, That his kingdom might come, in the light and knowledge of it, and in the power and efficacy of it. God speed the gospel plough. *Secondly*, That it might conquer, and be victorious over all opposition, Rev. vi. 2. *Thirdly*, That it might continue. *Hosanna is, Let the king live for ever*;

though his kingdom may be disturbed, let it never be destroyed, Ps. lxxii. 17. [3.] They bid him welcome into Jerusalem: "*Welcome is he that cometh*; we are heartily glad to see him; *come in thou blessed of the Lord*; and well may we attend with our blessings him who meets us with his." This welcome is like that (Ps. xxiv. 7—9), *Lift up your heads, O ye gates*. Thus we must every one of us bid Christ welcome into our hearts, that is, we must praise him, and be well pleased in him. As we should be highly pleased with the being and attributes of God, and his relation to us, so we should be with the person and offices of the Lord Jesus, and his mediation between us and God. Faith saith, *Blessed is he that cometh*.

II. The posture Christ puts himself into for receiving the respect that was paid him (v. 14): *When he had found, or procured, a young ass, he sat thereon*. It was but a poor sort of figure he made, he alone upon an ass, and a crowd of people about him shouting *Hosanna*. 1 This was much more of state than he used to take; he used to travel on foot, but now was mounted. Though his followers should be willing to take up with mean things, and not affect any thing that looks like grandeur, yet they are allowed to use the service of the inferior creatures, according as God in his providence gives particular possession of those things over which, by his covenant with Noah and his sons, he has given to man a general dominion. 2 Yet it was much less of state than the great ones of the world usually take. If he would have made a public entry, according to the state of a man of high degree, he should have rode in a chariot like that of Solomon's (Cant. iii. 9, 10), with *pillars of silver, the bottom of gold, and the covering of purple*; but, if we judge according to the fashion of this world, to be introduced thus was rather a disparagement than any honour to the king of Israel, for it seemed as if he would look great, and knew not how. His kingdom was not of this world, and therefore came not with outward pomp. He was now humbling himself, but in his exalted state John sees him in a vision on a white horse, with a bow and a crown.

III. The fulfilling of the scripture in this: *As it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion, v. 15*. This is quoted from Zech. ix. 9. To him bore all the prophets witness, and particularly to this concerning him.

1. It was foretold that Zion's king should come, should come *thus, sitting on an ass's colt*; even this minute circumstance was foretold, and Christ took care it should be punctually fulfilled. Note, (1.) Christ is Zion's king; the holy hill of Zion was of old destined to be the metropolis or royal city of the Messiah. (2.) Zion's king does and will look after her, and come to her; though for a short time he retires, in due time he returns. (3.) Though he comes but slowly

(an ass is slow-paced), yet he comes surely, and with such expressions of humility and condescension as greatly encourage the addresses and expectations of his loyal subjects. Humble supplicants may reach to speak with him. If this be a discouragement to Zion, that her king appears in no greater state or strength, let her know that though he comes to her riding on an ass's colt, yet he goes forth against her enemies riding on the heavens for her help, Deut. xxxiii. 26.

2. The daughter of Zion is therefore called upon to *behold her king*, to take notice of him and his approaches; behold and wonder, for he comes with observation, though not with outward show, Cant. iii. 11. *Fear not*. In the prophecy, Zion is told to rejoice greatly, and to shout, but here it is rendered, *Fear not*. Unbelieving fears are enemies to spiritual joys; if they be cured, if they be conquered, joy will come of course; Christ comes to his people to *silence* their fears. If the case be so that we cannot reach to the exultations of joy, yet we should labour to get from under the oppressions of fear. *Rejoice greatly*; at least, *fear not*.

IV. The remark made by the evangelist respecting the disciples (v. 16): *They understood not at first why Christ did this*, and how the scripture was fulfilled; but when *Jesus was glorified*, and thereupon the Spirit poured out, then they remembered that *these things were written of him* in the Old Testament, and that they and others had, in pursuance thereof, *done these things to him*.

1. See here the imperfection of the disciples in their infant state; even *they understood not these things at first*. They did not consider, when they fetched the ass and set him thereon, that they were performing the ceremony of the inauguration of Zion's king. Now observe, (1.) The scripture is often fulfilled by the agency of those who have not themselves an eye to the scripture in what they do, Isa. xlv. 4. (2.) There are many excellent things, both in the word and providence of God, which the disciples themselves do not at first understand: not at their first acquaintance with the things of God, while they *see men as trees walking*; not at the first proposal of the things to their view and consideration. That which afterwards is clear was at first dark and doubtful. (3.) It well becomes the disciples of Christ, when they are grown up to maturity in knowledge, frequently to reflect upon the follies and weaknesses of their first beginning, that free grace may have the glory of their proficiency, and they may have compassion on the ignorant. *When I was a child, I spoke as a child*.

2. See here the improvement of the disciples in their adult state. Though they had been children, they were not always so, but went on to perfection. Observe,

(1.) When they understood it: *When Jesus was glorified*; for, [1.] Till then they did not rightly apprehend the nature of his king-

dom, but expected it to appear in external pomp and power, and therefore knew not how to apply the scriptures which spoke of it to so mean an appearance. Note, The right understanding of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, of its powers, glories, and victories, would prevent our misinterpreting and misapplying the scriptures that speak of it. [2.] Till then the Spirit was not poured out, who was to lead them into all truth. Note, The disciples of Christ are enabled to understand the scriptures by the same Spirit that indited the scriptures. *The Spirit of revelation is to all the saints a spirit of wisdom*, Eph. i. 17, 18.

(2.) How they understood it; they compared the prophecy with the event, and put them together, that they might mutually receive light from each other, and so they came to understand both: *Then remembered they that these things were written of him* by the prophets, consonant to which they were done to him. Note, Such an admirable harmony there is between the word and works of God that the remembrance of what is written will enable us to understand what is done, and the observation of what is done will help us to understand what is written. *As we have heard, so have we seen*. The scripture is every day fulfilling.

V. The reason which induced the people to pay this respect to our Lord Jesus upon his coming into Jerusalem, though the government was so much set against him. It was because of the illustrious miracle he had lately wrought in raising Lazarus.

1. See here what account and what assurance they had of this miracle; no doubt, the city rang of it, the report of it was in all people's mouths. But those who considered it as a proof of Christ's mission, and a ground of their faith in him, that they might be well satisfied of the matter of fact, traced the report to those who were eye-witnesses of it, that they might *know the certainty* of it by the utmost evidence the thing was capable of: *The people therefore that stood by when he called Lazarus out of his grave, being found out and examined, bore record*, v. 17. They unanimously averred the thing to be true, beyond dispute or contradiction, and were ready, if called to it, to depose it upon oath, for so much is implied in the word *ἑμαρτύρησαν*. Note, The truth of Christ's miracles was evidenced by incontestable proofs. It is probable that those who had seen this miracle did not only assert it to those who asked them, but published it unasked, that this might add to the triumphs of this solemn day; and Christ's coming in now from Bethany, where it was done, would put them in mind of it. Note, Those who wish well to Christ's kingdom should be forward to proclaim what they know that may redound to his honour.

2. What improvement they made of it, and what influence it had upon them (v. 18)



For this cause, as much as any other, the people met him. (1.) Some, out of curiosity, were desirous to see one that had done such a wonderful work. Many a good sermon he had preached in Jerusalem, which drew not such crowds after him as this one miracle did. But, (2.) Others, out of conscience, studied to do him honour, as one sent of God. This miracle was reserved for one of the last, that it might confirm those which went before, and might gain him this honour just before his sufferings; Christ's works were all not only *well done* (Mark vii. 7) but *well timed*.

VI. The indignation of the Pharisees at all this; some of them, probably, saw, and they all soon heard of, Christ's public entry. The committee appointed to find out expedients to crush him thought they had gained their point when he had retired unto privacy, and that he would soon be forgotten in Jerusalem, but they now rage and fret when they see they imagined but a *vain thing*. 1. They own that they had got no ground against him; it was plainly to be perceived that they *prevailed nothing*. They could not, with all their insinuations, alienate the people's affections from him, nor with their menaces restrain them from showing their affection to him. Note, Those who oppose Christ, and fight against his kingdom, will be made to perceive that they prevail nothing. God will accomplish his own purposes in spite of them, and the little efforts of their impotent malice. *You prevail nothing, οὐκ ὠφελεῖτε—you profit nothing*. Note, There is nothing got by opposing Christ. 2. They own that he had got ground: *The world is gone after him*; there is a vast crowd attending him, a world of people: an hyperbole common in most languages. Yet here, like Caiaphas, ere they were aware, they prophesied that *the world would go after him*; some of all sorts, some from all parts; nations shall be disciplined. But to what intent was this said? (1.) Thus they *express* their own vexation at the growth of his interest; their envy makes them fret. If the *horn of the righteous be exalted with honour, the wicked see it, and are grieved* (Ps. cxii. 9, 10); considering how great these Pharisees were, and what abundance of respect was paid them, one would think they needed not grudge Christ so inconsiderable a piece of honour as was now done him; but proud men would monopolize honour, and have none share with them, like Haman. (2.) Thus they excite themselves and one another, to a more vigorous carrying on of the war against Christ. As if they should say, "Dallying and delaying thus will never do. We must take some other and more effectual course, to put a stop to this infection; it is time to try our utmost skill and force, before the grievance grows past redress." Thus the enemies of religion are made more resolute and active by being baffled; and shall its friends be disheartened

with every disappointment, who know its cause is righteous and will at last be victorious?

20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: 21 The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. 22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. 26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.

Honour is here paid to Christ by certain Greeks that enquired for him with respect. We are not told what day of Christ's last week this was, probably not the same day he rode into Jerusalem (for that day was taken up in public work), but a day or two after.

I. We are told who they were that paid this honour to our Lord Jesus: *Certain Greeks among the people who came up to worship at the feast, v. 20*. Some think they were *Jews of the dispersion*, some of the twelve tribes that were scattered among the Gentiles, and were called *Greeks*, Hellenist Jews; but others think they were Gentiles, those whom they called *proselytes of the gate*, such as the eunuch and Cornelius. Pure natural religion met with the best assistance among the Jews, and therefore those among the Gentiles who were piously inclined joined with them in their solemn meetings, as far as was allowed them. There were devout worshippers of the true God even among those that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. It was in the latter ages of the Jewish church that there was this flocking of the Gentiles to the temple at Jerusalem,—a happy presage of the taking down of the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles. The forbidding of the priests to accept of any oblation or sacrifice from a Gentile (which was done by Eleazar the son of Ananias, the high priest), Josephus says, was one of those things that brought the Romans upon them, *De Bello Jud. lib. ii. cap. 30*. Though these Greeks, if uncircumcised, were not admitted to eat the passover, yet they came to *worship at the feast*. We must thankfully use the privileges we have, though there may be others from which we are shut out.

II. What was the honour they paid him: they desired to be acquainted with him, *v. 21*. Having come to worship at the feast, they desired to make the best use they could of their time, and therefore applied to Philip, desiring that he would put them in a way to get some personal converse with the Lord Jesus. 1. Having a desire to see Christ, they were industrious in the use of proper means. They did not conclude it impossible, because he was so much crowded, to get to speak with him, nor rest in bare wishes, but resolved to try what could be done. Note, Those that would have the knowledge of Christ must seek it. 2. They made their application to Philip, one of his disciples. Some think that they had acquaintance with him formerly, and that they lived near Bethsaida in Galilee of the Gentiles; and then it teaches us that we should improve our acquaintance with good people, for our increase in the knowledge of Christ. It is good to know those who know the Lord. But if these Greeks had been near Galilee it is probable that they would have attended Christ there, where he mostly resided; therefore I think that they applied to him only because they saw him a close follower of Christ, and he was the first they could get to speak with. It was an instance of the veneration they had for Christ that they made an interest with one of his disciples for an opportunity to converse with him, a sign that they looked upon him as some great one, though he appeared mean. Those that would see Jesus by faith now that he is in heaven must apply to his ministers, whom he has appointed for this purpose, to guide poor souls in their enquiries after him. Paul must send for Ananias, and Cornelius for Peter. The bringing of these Greeks to the knowledge of Christ by the means of Philip signified the agency of the apostles, and the use made of their ministry in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith and the discipling of the nations. 3. Their address to Philip was in short this: *Sir, we would see Jesus*. They gave him a title of respect, as one worthy of honour, because he was in relation to Christ. Their business is, they would see Jesus; not only see his face, that they might be able to say, when they came home, they had seen one that was so much talked of (it is probable they had seen him when he appeared publicly); but they would have some free conversation with him, and be taught by him, for which it was no easy thing to find him at leisure, his hands were so full of public work. Now that they were come to worship at the feast, they would see Jesus. Note, In our attendance upon holy ordinances, and particularly the gospel passover, the great desire of our souls should be to see Jesus; to have our acquaintance with him increased, our dependence on him encouraged, our conformity to him carried on; to see him as ours, to keep up com-

munion with him, and derive communications of grace from him: we miss of our end in coming if we do not see Jesus. 4. Here is the report which Philip made of this to his Master, *v. 22*. He tells Andrew, who was of Bethsaida likewise, and was a *senior fellow* in the college of the apostles, contemporary with Peter, and consults him what was to be done whether he thought the motion would be acceptable or no, because Christ had sometimes said that he was *not sent but to the house of Israel*. They agree that it must be made; but then he would have Andrew go along with him, remembering the favourable acceptance Christ had promised them, in case *two of them should agree touching any thing they should ask*, Matt. xviii. 19. Note, Christ's ministers should be helpful to one another and concur in helping souls to Christ. *Two are better than one*. It should seem that Andrew and Philip brought this message to Christ when he was teaching in public, for we read (*v. 29*) of the *people that stood by*; but he was seldom alone.

III. Christ's acceptance of this honour paid him, signified by what he said to the people hereupon, *v. 23*, &c., where he foretels both the honour which he himself should have in being followed (*v. 23, 24*) and the honour which those should have that followed him, *v. 25, 26*. This was intended for the direction and encouragement of these Greeks, and all others that desired acquaintance with him.

1. He foresees that plentiful harvest, in the conversion of the Gentiles, of which this was as it were the first-fruits, *v. 23*. Christ said to the two disciples who spoke a good word for these Greeks, but doubted whether they should speed or no, *The hour is come when the Son of man shall be glorified*, by the accession of the Gentiles to the church, and in order to that he must be rejected of the Jews. Observe,

(1.) The end designed hereby, and that is the glorifying of the Redeemer: "And is it so? Do the Gentiles begin to enquire after me? Does the morning-star appear to them? and that blessed *day-spring*, which knows its place and time too, does that begin to *take hold of the ends of the earth*? Then the hour is come for the *glorifying of the Son of man*." This was no surprise to Christ, but a paradox to those about him. Note, [1.] The calling, the effectual calling, of the Gentiles into the church of God greatly redounded to the glory of the Son of man. The multiplying of the redeemed was the magnifying of the Redeemer. [2.] There was a time, a set time, an hour, a certain hour, for the glorifying of the Son of man, which did come at last, when the days of his humiliation were numbered and finished, and he speaks of the approach of it with exultation and triumph: *The hour is come*.

(2.) The strange way in which this end was to be attained, and that was by the death



of Christ, intimated in that similitude (v. 24): "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, you to whom I have spoken of my death and sufferings, except a corn of wheat fall not only to, but into, the ground, and die, and be buried and lost, it abideth alone, and you never see any more of it; but if it die according to the course of nature (otherwise it would be a miracle) it bringeth forth much fruit, God giving to every seed its own body.*" Christ is the corn of wheat, the most valuable and useful grain. Now here is,

[1.] The necessity of Christ's humiliation intimated. He would never have been the living quickening head and root of the church if he had not descended from heaven to this accursed earth and ascended from earth to the accursed tree, and so accomplished our redemption. He must *pour out his soul unto death*, else he cannot *divide a portion with the great*, Isa. liii. 12. He shall have a seed given him, but he must shed his blood to purchase them and purify them, must win them and wear them. It was necessary likewise as a qualification for that glory which he was to have by the accession of multitudes to his church; for if he had not by his sufferings made satisfaction for sin, and so brought in an everlasting righteousness, he would not have been sufficiently provided for the entertainment of those that should come to him, and therefore must *abide alone*.

[2.] The advantage of Christ's humiliation illustrated. He *fell to the ground* in his incarnation, seemed to be buried alive in this earth, so much was his glory veiled; but this was not all: *he died*. This immortal seed submitted to the laws of mortality, he lay in the grave like seed under the clods; but as the seed comes up again green, and fresh, and flourishing, and with a great increase, so one dying Christ gathered to himself thousands of living Christians, and he became their root. The salvation of souls hitherto, and henceforward to the end of time, is all owing to the dying of this *corn of wheat*. Hereby the Father and the Son are glorified, the church is replenished, the mystical body is kept up, and will at length be completed; and, when time shall be no more, the Captain of our salvation, *bringing many sons to glory* by the virtue of his death, and being so made perfect by sufferings, shall be celebrated for ever with the admiring praises of saints and angels, Heb. ii. 10, 13.

2. He foretels and promises an abundant recompence to those who should cordially embrace him and his gospel and interest, and should make it appear that they do so by their faithfulness in suffering for him or in serving him.

(1.) In suffering for him (v. 25): *He that loves his life better than Christ shall lose it; but he that hates his life in this world, and prefers the favour of God and an interest in Christ before it, shall keep it unto life eternal.* This doctrine Christ much insisted on, it be-

ing the great design of his religion to wean us from this world, by setting before us another world.

[1.] See here the fatal consequences of an inordinate love of life; many a man hugs himself to death, and loses his life by over-loving it. He that so loves his animal life as to indulge his appetite, and make *provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*, shall thereby shorten his days, shall lose the life he is so fond of, and another infinitely better. He that is so much in love with the life of the body, and the ornaments and delights of it, as, for fear of exposing it or them, to deny Christ, he shall lose it, that is, lose a real happiness in the other world, while he thinks to secure an imaginary one in this. *Skin for skin* a man may give for his life, and make a good bargain, but he that gives his soul, his God, his heaven, for it, buys life too dear, and is guilty of the folly of him who sold a birth-right for a mess of pottage.

[2.] See also the blessed recompence of a holy contempt of life. He that so hates the life of the body as to venture it for the preserving of the life of his soul shall find both, with unspeakable advantage, in eternal life. Note, *First*, It is required of the disciples of Christ that they *hate their life in this world*; a life in this world supposes a life in the other world, and this is hated when it is loved less than that. Our life in this world includes all the enjoyments of our present state, riches, honours, pleasures, and long life in the possession of them; these we must hate, that is, despise them as vain and insufficient to make us happy, dread the temptations that are in them, and cheerfully part with them whenever they come in competition with the service of Christ, Acts xx. 24; xxi. 13; Rev. xii. 11. See here much of the *power of godliness*—that it conquers the strongest natural affections; and much of the *mystery of godliness*—that it is the greatest wisdom, and yet makes men hate their own lives. *Secondly*, Those who, in love to Christ, hate their own lives in this world, shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just. *He that hateth his life shall keep it; he puts it into the hands of one that will keep it to life eternal*, and restore it with as great an improvement as the heavenly life can make of the earthly one.

(2.) In serving him (v. 26): *If any man profess to serve me, let him follow me*, as a servant follows his master; and *where I am, he that serves me, him will my Father honour*; and that is enough, more than enough. The Greeks desired to see Jesus (v. 21), but Christ lets them know that it was not enough to see him, they must *serve him*. He did

not come into the world, to be a show for us to gaze at, but a king to be ruled by. And he says this for the encouragement of those who enquired after him to become his servants. In taking servants it is usual to fix both the work and the wages; Christ does both here.

[1.] Here is the work which Christ expects from his servants; and it is very easy and reasonable, and such as becomes them.

*First*, Let them attend their Master's movements: *If any man serve me, let him follow me*. Christians must follow Christ, follow his methods and prescriptions, *do the things that he says*, follow his example and pattern, *walk as he also walked*, follow his conduct by his providence and Spirit. We must go whither he leads us, and in the way he leads us; must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes before us. "If any man serve me, if he put himself into that relation to me, let him apply himself to the business of my service, and be always ready at my call." Or, "If any man do indeed serve me, let him make an open and public profession of his relation to me, by following me, as the servant owns his Master by following him in the streets."

*Secondly*, Let them attend their Master's repose: *Where I am, there let my servant be*, to wait upon me. Christ is where his church is, in the assemblies of his saints, where his ordinances are administered; and *there let his servants be*, to present themselves before him, and receive instructions from him. Or, "Where I am to be in heaven, whither I am now going, there let the thoughts and affections of my servants be, there let their conversation be, *where Christ sitteth*." Col. iii. 1, 2.

[2.] Here are the wages which Christ promises to his servants; and they are very rich and noble.

*First*, They shall be happy with him: *Where I am, there shall also my servant be*. To be with him, when he was here in poverty and disgrace, would seem but poor preferment, and therefore, doubtless, he means being with him in paradise, sitting with him at his table above, on his throne there; it is the happiness of heaven to be with Christ there, ch. xvii. 24. Christ speaks of heaven's happiness as if he were already in it: *Where I am*; because he was sure of it, and near to it, and it was still *upon his heart*, and *in his eye*. And the same joy and glory which he thought recompence enough for all his services and sufferings are proposed to his servants as the recompence of theirs. Those that follow him in the way shall be with him in the end.

*Secondly*, They shall be honoured by his Father; he will make them amends for all their pains and loss, by conferring an honour upon them, such as becomes a great God to give, but far beyond what such worthless worms of the earth could expect to receive.

The rewarder is God himself, who takes the services done to the Lord Jesus as done to himself. The reward is honour, true lasting honour, the highest honour; it is the honour that comes from God. It is said (Prov. xxvii. 18), *He that waits on his master* (humbly and diligently) *shall be honoured*. Those that wait on Christ God will put honour upon, such as will be taken notice of another day, though now under a veil. Those that serve Christ must humble themselves, and are commonly vilified by the world, in recompence of both which they shall be exalted in due time.

Thus far Christ's discourse has reference to those Greeks who desired to *see him*, encouraging them to serve him. What became of those Greeks we are not told, but are willing to hope that those who thus asked the way to heaven, with their faces thitherward, found it, and walked in it.

27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. 29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard *it*, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. 30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. 31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. 32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. 33 This he said, signifying what death he should die. 34 The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? 35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. 36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

Honour is here done to Christ by his Father in a voice from heaven, occasioned by the following part of his discourse, and which gave occasion to a further conference with the people. In these verses we have,



I. Christ's address to his Father, upon occasion of the trouble which seized his spirit at this time: *Now is my soul troubled*, v. 27. A strange word to come from Christ's mouth, and at this time surprising, for it comes in the midst of divers pleasing prospects, in which, one would think, he should have said, *Now is my soul pleased*. Note, Trouble of soul sometimes follows after great enlargements of spirit. In this world of mixture and change we must expect damps upon our joy, and the highest degree of comfort to be the next degree to trouble. When Paul had been in the third heavens, he had a *thorn in the flesh*. Observe,

1. Christ's dread of his approaching sufferings: *Now is my soul troubled*. Now the black and dismal scene began, now were the first throes of the travail of his soul, now his agony began, his soul *began to be exceedingly sorrowful*. Note, (1.) The sin of our soul was the trouble of Christ's soul, when he undertook to redeem and save us, and to make his soul an offering for our sin. (2.) The trouble of his soul was designed to ease the trouble of our souls; for, after this, he said to his disciples (*ch. xiv. 1*), "*Let not your hearts be troubled; why should yours be troubled and mine too?*" Our Lord Jesus went on cheerfully in his work, in prospect of the joy set before him, and yet submitted to a trouble of soul. Holy mourning is consistent with spiritual joy, and the way to eternal joy. Christ was *now* troubled, now in sorrow, now in fear, now for a season; but it would not be so always, it would not be so long. The same is the comfort of Christians in their troubles; they are but *for a moment*, and will be turned into joy.

2. The strait he seems to be in hereupon, intimated in those words, *And what shall I say?* This does not imply his consulting with any other, as if he needed advice, but considering with himself what was fit to be said now. When our souls are troubled we must take heed of speaking unadvisedly, but debate with ourselves what we shall say. Christ speaks like one at a loss, as if what he should choose he wot not. There was a struggle between the work he had taken upon him, which required sufferings, and the nature he had taken upon him, which dreaded them; between these two he here pauses with. *What shall I say?* He looked, and there was *none to help*, which put him to a stand. Calvin observes this as a great instance of Christ's humiliation, that he should speak thus like one at a loss. *Quo se magis exinanivit gloriæ Dominus, eo luculentius habemus erga nos amoris specimen*—The more entirely the Lord of glory emptied himself, the brighter is the proof of the love he bore us. Thus he was in all points tempted like as we are, to encourage us, when we know not what to do, to direct our eyes to him.

3. His prayer to God in this strait: *Father, save me from this hour*, *ἐκ τῆς ὥρας*

*ταύτης*—out of this hour, praying, not so much that it might not come as that he might be brought through it. *Save me from this hour*; this was the language of innocent nature, and its feelings poured forth in prayer. Note, It is the duty and interest of troubled souls to have recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and in prayer to eye him as a Father. Christ was voluntary in his sufferings, and yet prayed to be saved from them. Note, Prayer against a trouble may very well consist with patience under it and submission to the will of God in it. Observe, He calls his suffering *this hour*, meaning the expected events of the time now at hand. Hereby he intimates that the time of his suffering was, (1.) A set time, set to an hour, and he knew it. It was said twice before that his hour was not yet come, but it was now so near that he might say it was come. (2.) A short time. An hour is soon over, so were Christ's sufferings; he could see through them to the *joy set before him*.

4. His acquiescence in his Father's will, notwithstanding. He presently corrects himself, and, as it were, recalls what he had said: *But for this cause came I to this hour*. Innocent nature got the first word, but divine wisdom and love got the last. Note, those who would proceed regularly must go upon second thoughts. The complainant speaks first; but, if we would judge righteously, we must hear the other side. With the second thought he checked himself: *For this cause came I to this hour*; he does not silence himself with this, that he could not avoid it, there was no remedy; but satisfies himself with this, that he would not avoid it, for it was pursuant to his own voluntary engagement, and was to be the crown of his whole undertaking; should he now fly off, this would frustrate all that had been done hitherto. Reference is here had to the divine counsels concerning his sufferings, by virtue of which it behoved him thus to submit and suffer. Note, This should reconcile us to the darkest hours of our lives, that we were all along designed for them; see 1 Thess. iii. 3.

5. His regard to his Father's honour herein. Upon the withdrawing of his former petition, he presents another, which he will abide by: *Father, glorify thy name*, to the same purport with *Father, thy will be done*; for God's will is for his own glory. This expresses more than barely a submission to the will of God; it is a consecration of his sufferings to the glory of God. It was a mediatorial word, and was spoken by him as our surety, who had undertaken to satisfy divine justice for our sin. The wrong which by sin we have done to God is in his glory, his declarative glory; for in nothing else are we capable of doing him injury. We were never able to make him satisfaction for this wrong done him, nor any creature for us; nothing therefore remained but that God should get him

honour upon us in our utter ruin. Here therefore our Lord Jesus interposed, undertook to satisfy God's injured honour, and he did it by his humiliation; he denied himself in, and divested himself of, the honours due to the Son of God incarnate, and submitted to the greatest reproach. Now here he makes a tender of this satisfaction as an equivalent: "*Father, glorify thy name*; let thy justice be honoured upon the sacrifice, not upon the sinner; let the debt be levied upon me, I am solvent, the principal is not." Thus he *restored that which he took not away*.

II. The Father's answer to this address; for he heard him always, and does still. Observe, 1. How this answer was given. By a voice from heaven. The Jews speak much of a *Bath-kôl*—*the daughter of a voice*, as one of those divers manners by which God in time past spoke to the prophets; but we do not find any instance of his speaking thus to any but to our Lord Jesus; it was an honour reserved for him (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5), and here, probably, this audible voice was introduced by some visible appearance, either of light or darkness, for both have been used as vehicles of the divine glory. 2. What the answer was. It was an express return to that petition, *Father, glorify thy name*: *I have glorified it already, and I will glorify it yet again*. When we pray as we are taught, *Our Father, hallowed be thy name*, this is a comfort to us, that it is an answered prayer; answered to Christ here, and in him to all true believers. (1.) The name of God had been glorified in the life of Christ, in his doctrine and miracles, and all the examples he gave of holiness and goodness. (2.) It should be further glorified in the death and sufferings of Christ. His wisdom and power, his justice and holiness, his truth and goodness, were greatly glorified; the demands of a broken law were fully answered; the affront done to God's government satisfied for; and God accepted the satisfaction, and declared himself well pleased. What God has done for the glorifying of his own name is an encouragement to us to expect what he will yet further do. He that has secured the interests of his own glory will still secure them.

III. The opinion of the standers-by concerning this voice, v. 29. We may hope there were some among them whose minds were so well prepared to receive a divine revelation that they understood what was said and bore record of it. But notice is here taken of the perverse suggestion of the multitude: some of them said that *it thundered*; others, who took notice that there was plainly an articulate intelligible voice, said that certainly an *angel spoke to him*. Now this shows, 1. That it was a real thing, even in the judgment of those that were not at all well affected to him. 2. That they were loth to admit so plain a proof of Christ's divine mission. They would rather say that

it was this, or that, or any thing, than that God spoke to him in answer to his prayer; and yet, if it thundered with articulate sounds (as Rev. x. 3, 4), was not that God's voice? Or, if angels spoke to him, are not they God's messengers? But thus *God speaks once, yea twice, and man perceives it not*.

IV. The account which our Saviour himself gives of this voice.

1. Why it was sent (v. 30): "*It came not because of me, not merely for my encouragement and satisfaction*" (then it might have been whispered in his ear privately), "*but for your sakes*." (1.) "*That all you who heard it may believe that the Father hath sent me*." What is said from heaven concerning our Lord Jesus, and the glorifying of the Father in him, is said for our sakes, that we may be brought to submit to him and rest upon him. (2.) "*That you my disciples, who are to follow me in sufferings, may therein be comforted with the same comforts that carry me on*." Let this encourage them to part with life itself for his sake, if they be called to it, that it will redound to the honour of God. Note, The promises and supports granted to our Lord Jesus in his sufferings were intended for our sakes. *For our sakes he sanctified himself, and comforted himself*.

2. What was the meaning of it. He that lay in the Father's bosom knew his voice, and what was the meaning of it; and two things God intended when he said that he would *glorify his own name*:—

(1.) That by the death of Christ Satan should be conquered (v. 31): *Now is the judgment*. He speaks with a divine exultation and triumph. "*Now the year of my redeemed is come, and the time prefixed for breaking the serpent's head, and giving a total rent to the powers of darkness; now for that glorious achievement: now, now, that great work is to be done which has been so long thought of in the divine counsels, so long talked of in the written word, which has been so much the hope of saints and the dread of devils*." The matter of the triumph is, [1.] *That now is the judgment of the world*; κρίσις, take it as a medical term: "*Now is the crisis of this world*." The sick and diseased world is now upon the turning point; this is the critical day upon which the trembling scale will turn for life or death, to all mankind; all that are not recovered by this will be left helpless and hopeless. Or, rather, it is a law term, as we take it: "*Now, judgment is entered, in order to the taking out of execution against the prince of this world*." Note, The death of Christ was the *judgment of this world*. First, It is a judgment of discovery and distinction—*judicium discretionis*; so Austin. Now is the trial of this world, for men shall have their character according as the cross of Christ is to them; to some it is foolishness and a stumbling-block, to others it is the wisdom and power of God; of which there



was a figure in the two thieves that were crucified with him. By this men are judged, what they think of the death of Christ. *Secondly*, It is a judgment of favour and absolution to the chosen ones that are in the world. Christ upon the cross interposed between a righteous God and a guilty world as a sacrifice for sin and a surety for sinners, so that when he was judged, and *iniquity laid upon him*, and he was wounded for our transgressions, it was as it were the judgment of this world, for an everlasting righteousness was thereby brought in, not for Jews only, but the whole world, 1 John, ii. 1, 2; Dan. ix. 24. *Thirdly*, It is a judgment of condemnation given against the powers of darkness; see *ch.* xvi. 11. Judgment is put for vindication and deliverance, the asserting of an invaded right. At the death of Christ there was a famous trial between Christ and Satan, the serpent and the promised seed; the trial was for the world, and the lordship of it; the devil had long borne sway among the children of men, time out of mind; he now pleads prescription, grounding his claim also upon the forfeiture incurred by sin. We find him willing to have come to a composition (Luke iv. 6, 7); he would have given the kingdoms of this world to Christ, provided he would hold them by, from, and under him. But Christ would try it out with him; by dying he takes off the forfeiture to divine justice, and then fairly disputes the title, and recovers it in the court of heaven. Satan's dominion is declared to be a usurpation, and the world adjudged to the Lord Jesus as his right, Ps. ii. 6, 8. The judgment of this world is, that it belongs to Christ, and not to Satan; to Christ therefore let us all *attune* tenants. [2.] *That now is the prince of this world cast out.* *First*, It is the devil that is here called the *prince of this world*, because he rules over the men of the world by the things of the world; he is the *ruler of the darkness of this world*, that is, of this dark world, of those in it that *walk in darkness*, 2 Cor. iv. 4; Eph. vi. 12. *Secondly*, He is said to be *cast out*, to be *now* cast out; for, whatever had been done hitherto towards the weakening of the devil's kingdom was done in the virtue of a Christ to come, and therefore is said to be done *now*. Christ, reconciling the world to God by the merit of his death, broke the power of death, and cast out Satan as a destroyer; Christ, reducing the world to God by the doctrine of his cross, broke the power of sin, and cast out Satan as a deceiver. The bruising of his heel was the breaking of the serpent's head, Gen. iii. 15. When his oracles were silenced, and the temples forsaken, his idols famished, and the kingdoms of the world became Christ's kingdoms, then was the *prince of the world cast out*, as appears by comparing this with John's vision (Rev. xii. 8—11), where it is said to be done by the *blood of the Lamb*. Christ's frequent casting of devils out of the bodies of

people was an indication of the great design of his whole undertaking. Observe, With what assurance Christ here speaks of the victory over Satan; it is as good as done, and even when he yields to death he triumphs over it.

(2.) That by the death of Christ souls should be converted, and this would be the casting out of Satan (*v.* 32): *If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.* Here observe two things:—

[1.] The great design of our Lord Jesus, which was to *draw all men to him*, not the Jews only, who had been long in profession a people *near to God*, but the Gentiles also, who had been *afar off*; for he was to be the *desire of all nations* (Hag. ii. 7), and to *him must the gathering of the people be*. That which his enemies dreaded was that the world would go after him; and he would draw them to him, notwithstanding their opposition. Observe here how Christ himself is all in all in the conversion of a soul. *First*, It is Christ that draws: *I will draw*. It is sometimes ascribed to the Father (*ch.* vi. 44), but here to the Son, who is the *arm of the Lord*. He does not drive by force, but draws with the *cords of a man* (Hos. xi. 4; Jer. xxxi. 3), draws as the loadstone; the soul is *made willing*, but it is in a *day of power*. *Secondly*, It is to Christ that we are drawn: "I will draw them to me, as the centre of their unity." The soul that was at a distance from Christ is brought into an acquaintance with him, he that was shy and distrustful of him is brought to love him and trust in him,—drawn up to his terms, into his arms. Christ was now going to heaven, and he would draw men's hearts to him thither.

[2.] The strange method he took to accomplish his design by *being lifted up from the earth*. What he meant by this, to prevent mistake, we are told (*v.* 33): *This he spoke signifying by what death he should die*, the death of the cross, though they had designed and attempted to stone him to death. He that was crucified was first nailed to the cross, and then lifted up upon it. He was *lifted up as a spectacle to the world*; lifted up between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either; yet the word here used signifies an honourable advancement, *ἐν ὑψωθῆ*—*If I be exalted*; he reckoned his sufferings his honour. Whatever death we die, if we die in Christ we shall be lifted up out of this dungeon, this den of lions, into the regions of light and love. We should learn of our Master to speak of dying with a holy pleasantness, and to say, "We shall then be lifted up." Now Christ's drawing all men to him followed his being *lifted up from the earth*. *First*, It followed after it in time. The great increase of the church was after the death of Christ; while Christ lived, we read of thousands at a sermon miraculously fed, but after his death we read of thousands



at a sermon added to the church. Israel began to multiply in Egypt after the death of Joseph. *Secondly*, It followed upon it as a blessed consequence of it. Note, There is a powerful virtue and efficacy in the death of Christ to draw souls to him. The cross of Christ, though to some a *stumbling-stone*, is to others a *loadstone*. Some make it an allusion to the drawing of fish into a net; the lifting up of Christ was as the spreading of the net (Matt. xiii. 47, 48); or to the setting up of a standard, which draws soldiers together; or, rather, it refers to the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, which drew all those to it who were stung with fiery serpents, as soon as ever it was known that it was lifted up, and there was healing virtue in it. O what flocking was there to it! So there was to Christ, when salvation through him was preached to all nations; see *ch.* iii. 14, 15. Perhaps it has some reference to the posture in which Christ was crucified, with his arms stretched out, to invite all to him, and embrace all that come. Those that put Christ to that ignominious death thought thereby to drive all men from him; but the devil was outshot in his own bow. *Out of the eater came forth meat.*

V. The people's exception against what he said, and their cavil at it, *v.* 34. Though they had heard the voice from heaven, and the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, yet they object, and pick quarrels with him. Christ had called himself the *Son of man* (*v.* 23), which they knew to be one of the titles of the Messiah, *Dan.* vii. 13. He had also said that the *Son of man must be lifted up*, which they understood of his dying, and probably he explained himself so, and some think he repeated what he said to Nicodemus (*ch.* iii. 14), *So must the Son of man be lifted up.* Now against this,

1. They alleged those scriptures of the Old Testament which speak of the perpetuity of the Messiah, that he should be so far from being cut off in the midst of his days that he should be a *priest for ever* (Psa. cx. 4), and a *king for ever* (Psa. lxxxix. 29, &c.), that he should have *length of days for ever and ever*, and *his years as many generations* (Psa. xxi. 4; lxi. 6), from all which they inferred that the Messiah should not die. Thus great knowledge in the letter of the scripture, if the heart be unsanctified, is capable of being abused to serve the cause of infidelity, and to fight against Christianity with its own weapons. Their perverseness in opposing this to what Jesus had said will appear if we consider, (1.) That, when they vouched the scripture to prove that the Messiah *abideth for ever*, they took no notice of those texts which speak of the Messiah's death and sufferings: they had heard out of the law that *Messiah abideth for ever*; and had they never heard out of the law that Messiah should *be cut off* (*Dan.* ix. 26), and

that he should *pour out his soul unto death* (Isa. liii. 12), and particularly that *his hands and feet should be pierced*? Why then do they make so strange of the *lifting up of the Son of man*? Note, We often run into great mistakes, and then defend them with scripture arguments, by putting those things asunder which God in his word has put together, and opposing one truth under pretence of supporting another. We have heard out of the gospel that which exalts free grace, we have heard also that which enjoins duty, and we must cordially embrace both, and not separate them, nor set them at variance. (2.) That, when they opposed what Christ said concerning the sufferings of the Son of man, they took no notice of what he had said concerning his glory and exaltation. They had heard out of the law that *Christ abideth for ever*; and had they not heard our Lord Jesus say that he should be glorified, that he should bring forth much fruit, and draw all men to him? Had he not just now promised immortal honours to his followers, which supposed his abiding for ever? But this they overlooked. Thus unfair disputants oppose some parts of the opinion of an adversary, to which, if they would but take it entire, they could not but subscribe; and in the doctrine of Christ there are paradoxes, which to men of corrupt minds are stones of stumbling—as *Christ crucified*, and yet *glorified*; *lifted up from the earth*, and yet *drawing all men to him*.

2. They asked hereupon, *Who is this Son of man*? This they asked, not with a desire to be instructed, but tauntingly and insultingly, as if now they had baffled him, and run him down. "Thou sayest, *The Son of man must die*; we have proved the Messiah must not, and where is then thy Messiahship? This Son of man, as thou callest thyself, cannot be the Messiah, thou must therefore think of something else to pretend to." Now that which prejudiced them against Christ was his meanness and poverty; they would rather have no Christ than a suffering one.

VI. What Christ said to this exception, or rather what he said *upon* it. The objection was a perfect cavil; they might, if they pleased, answer it themselves: man dies, and yet is immortal, and abideth for ever, so the *Son of man*. Therefore, instead of answering these fools according to their folly, he gives them a serious caution to take heed of trifling away the day of their opportunities in such vain and fruitless cavils as these (*v.* 35, 36): "*Yet a little while, and but a little while, is the light with you*; therefore be wise for yourselves, and *walk while you have the light*."

1. In general, we may observe here, (1.) The concern Christ has for the souls of men, and his desire of their welfare. With what tenderness does he here admonish those to look well to themselves who were contriving



ill against him! Even when he *endured the contradiction of sinners*, he sought their conversion. See Prov. xxix. 10. (2.) The method he takes with these objectors, *with meekness instructing those that opposed themselves*, 2 Tim. ii. 25. Were but men's consciences awakened with a due concern about their everlasting state, and did they consider how little time they have to spend, and none to spare, they would not waste precious thoughts and time in trifling cavils.

2. Particularly we have here,

(1.) The advantage they enjoyed in having Christ and his gospel among them, with the shortness and uncertainty of their enjoyment of it: *Yet a little while is the light with you*. Christ is this light; and some of the ancients suggest that, in calling himself the light, he gives a tacit answer to their objection. His dying upon the cross was as consistent with his *abiding for ever* as the setting of the sun every night is with his perpetuity. The duration of Christ's kingdom is compared to that of the sun and moon, Ps. lxxii. 17; lxxxix. 36, 37. The ordinances of heaven are unchangeably fixed, and yet the sun and moon set and are eclipsed; so Christ the Sun of righteousness abides for ever, and yet was eclipsed by his sufferings, and was but a little while within our horizon. Now, [1.] The Jews at this time had the *light with them*; they had Christ's bodily presence, heard his preaching, saw his miracles. The scripture is to us a light shining in a dark place. [2.] It was to be but a little while with them; Christ would shortly leave them, their visible church state would soon after be dissolved and the kingdom of God taken from them, and blindness and hardness would happen unto Israel. Note, It is good for us all to consider what a little while we are to have the light with us. Time is short, and perhaps opportunity not so long. The candlestick may be removed; at least, we must be removed shortly. Yet a little while is the light of life with us; yet a little while is the light of the gospel with us, the day of grace, the means of grace, the Spirit of grace, yet a very little while.

(2.) The warning given them to make the best of this privilege while they enjoyed it, because of the danger they were in of losing it: *Walk while you have the light*; as travellers who make the best of their way forward, that they may not be benighted in their journey, because travelling in the night is uncomfortable and unsafe. "Come," say they, "let us mend our pace, and get forward, while we have day-light." Thus wise should we be for our souls who are journeying towards eternity. Note, [1.] It is our business to walk, to press forward towards heaven, and to get nearer to it by being made fitter for it. Our life is but a day, and we have a day's journey to go. [2.] The best time of walking is while we have the light. The day is the proper season for work, as the night

is for rest. The proper time for getting grace is when we have the word of grace preached to us, and the Spirit of grace striving with us, and therefore then is the time to be busy [3.] We are highly concerned thus to improve our opportunities, for fear lest our day be finished before we have finished our day's work and our day's journey: "*Lest darkness come upon you*, lest you lose your opportunities, and can neither recover them nor despatch the business you have to do without them." Then *darkness* comes, that is, such an utter incapacity to make sure the great salvation as renders the state of the careless sinner quite deplorable; so that, if his work be undone then, it is likely to be undone for ever.

(3.) The sad condition of those who have sinned away the gospel, and are come to the period of their day of grace. *They walk in darkness*, and know neither *where* they go, nor *whither* they go; neither the way they are walking in, nor the end they are walking towards. He that is destitute of the light of the gospel, and is not acquainted with its discoveries and directions, wanders endlessly in mistakes and errors, and a thousand crooked paths, and is not aware of it. Set aside the instructions of the Christian doctrine, and we know little of the difference between good and evil. He is going to destruction, and knows not his danger, for he is either sleeping or dancing at the pit's brink.

(4.) The great duty and interest of every one of us inferred from all this (v. 36): *While you have light, believe in the light*. The Jews had now Christ's presence with them, let them improve it; afterwards they had the first offers of the gospel made to them by the apostles wherever they came; now this is an admonition to them not to out-stand the market, but to accept the offer when it was made to them: the same Christ saith to all who enjoy the gospel. Note, [1.] It is the duty of every one of us to *believe in the gospel light*, to receive it as a divine light, to subscribe to the truths it discovers, for it is a light to our eyes, and to follow its guidance, for it is a light to our feet. Christ is the light, and we must believe in him as he is revealed to us; as a true light that will not deceive us, a sure light that will not misguide us. [2.] We are concerned to do this while we have the light, to lay hold on Christ while we have the gospel to show us the way to him and direct us in that way. [3.] Those that believe in the light *shall be the children of light*; they shall be owned as *Christians*, who are called *children of light* (Luke xvi. 8; Eph. v. 8) and of the day, 1 Thess. v. 5. Those that have God for their Father are children of light, for God is light; they are born from above, and heirs of heaven, and children of light, for heaven is light.

VII. Christ's retiring from them, hereupon. *These things spoke Jesus*, and said no more at this time, but left this to their con-

sideration, and departed, and did hide himself from them. And this he did, 1. For their conviction and awakening. If they will not regard what he hath said, he will have nothing more to say to them. They are joined to their infidelity, as Ephraim to idols; *let them alone*. Note, Christ justly removes the means of grace from those that quarrel with him, and *hides his face from a froward generation*, Deut. xxxii. 20. 2. For his own preservation. He hid himself from their rage and fury, retreating, it is probable, to Bethany, where he lodged. By this it appears that what he said irritated and exasperated them, and they were made worse by that which should have made them better.

37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: 38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? 39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. 41 These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

We have here the honour done to our Lord Jesus by the Old-Testament prophets, who foretold and lamented the infidelity of the many that believed not on him. It was indeed a dishonour and grief to Christ that his doctrine met with so little acceptance and so much opposition; but *this* takes off the wonder and reproach, makes the offence of it to cease, and made it no disappointment to Christ, that herein the scriptures were fulfilled. Two things are here said concerning this untractable people, and both were foretold by the evangelical prophet Isaiah, that they *did not* believe, and that they *could not* believe.

I They did not believe (v. 37): *Though he had done so many miracles before them*, which, one would think, should have convinced them, yet they believed not, but opposed him. Observe,

1. The abundance of the means of conviction which Christ afforded them: He *did miracles, so many miracles*; *ποσάυτα σημεῖα*, signifying both so many and so great. This refers to all the miracles he had wrought formerly; nay, the blind and lame now came to him into the temple, and he healed them, Matt. xxi. 14. His miracles were the great proof of his mission, and on the evidence of them he relied. Two things concerning them he here insists upon—(1.) The number of

them; they were *many*,—various and of divers kinds; numerous and often repeated; and every new miracle confirmed the reality of all that went before. The multitude of his miracles was not only a proof of his unexhausted power, but gave the greater opportunity to examine them; and, if there had been a cheat in them, it was morally impossible but that in some or other of them it would have been discovered; and, being all *miracles of mercy*, the more there were the more good was done. (2.) The notoriety of them. He wrought these miracles *before them*, not at a distance, not in a corner, but before many witnesses, appearing to their own eyes.

2. The inefficacy of these means: *Yet they believed not on him*. They could not gainsay the premises, and yet would not grant the conclusion. Note, The most plentiful and powerful means of conviction will not of themselves work faith in the depraved prejudiced hearts of men. These *saw*, and yet *believed not*.

3. The fulfilling of the scripture in this (v. 38) *That the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled*. Not that these infidel Jews designed the fulfilling of the scripture (they rather fancied those scriptures which speak of the church's best sons to be fulfilled in themselves), but the event exactly answered the prediction, *so that (ut for ita ut)* this saying of Esaias was fulfilled. The more improbable any event is, the more does a divine foresight appear in the prediction of it. One could not have imagined that the kingdom of the Messiah, supported with such pregnant proofs, should have met with so much opposition among the Jews, and therefore their unbelief is called a *marvellous work, and a wonder*, Isa. xxix. 14. Christ himself *marvelled at it*, but it was what Isaiah foretold (Isa. liii. 1), and now it is accomplished. Observe, (1.) The gospel is here called *their report*: *Who has believed*, τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν—our *hearing*, which we have heard from God, and which you have heard from us. Our report is the report that we bring, like the report of a matter of fact, or the report of a solemn resolution in the senate. (2.) It is foretold that few comparatively of those to whom this report is brought will be persuaded to give credit to it. Many hear it, but few heed it and embrace it: *Who hath believed it?* Here and there one, but none to speak of; not the wise, not the noble; it is to them but a report which wants confirmation. (3.) It is spoken of as a thing to be greatly lamented that so few believe the report of the gospel. *Lord* is here prefixed from the LXX., but is not in the Hebrew, and intimates a sorrowful account brought to God by the messengers of the cold entertainment which they and their report had; as *the servant came, and showed his lord all these things*, Luke xiv. 21. (4.) The reason why men believe not the report of the gospel is because *the arm of*



the Lord is not revealed to them, that is, because they do not acquaint themselves with, and submit themselves to, the grace of God; they do not experimentally know the virtue and fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection, in which the arm of the Lord is revealed. They saw Christ's miracles, but did not see the *arm of the Lord revealed in them*.

II. They could not believe, and therefore they could not because *Esaias said, He hath blinded their eyes*. This is a hard saying, who can explain it? We are sure that God is infinitely just and merciful, and therefore we cannot think there is in any such an impotency to good, resulting from the counsels of God, as lays them under a fatal necessity of being evil. God damns none by mere sovereignty; yet it is said, *They could not believe*. St. Austin, coming in course to the exposition of these words, expresses himself with a holy fear of entering upon an enquiry into this mystery. *Iusta sunt judicia ejus, sed occulta—His judgments are just, but hidden*.

1. They could not believe, that is, they would not; they were obstinately resolved in their infidelity; thus Chrysostom and Austin incline to understand it; and the former gives divers instances of scripture of the putting of an impotency to signify the invincible refusal of the will, as Gen. xxvii. 4, *They could not speak peaceably to him*. And ch. vii. 7. This is a moral impotency, like that of one that is accustomed to do evil, Jer. xiii. 23. But,

2. They could not because *Esaias* had said, *He hath blinded their eyes*. Here the difficulty increases; it is certain that God is not the author of sin, and yet,

(1.) There is a righteous hand of God sometimes to be acknowledged in the blindness and obstinacy of those who persist in impenitency and unbelief, by which they are justly punished for their former resistance of the divine light and rebellion against the divine law. If God withhold abused grace, and give men over to indulged lusts,—if he permit the evil spirit to do his work on those that resisted the good Spirit,—and if in his providence he lay stumbling-blocks in the way of sinners, which confirm their prejudices, then he *blinds their eyes*, and *hardens their hearts*, and these are spiritual judgments, like the giving up of idolatrous Gentiles to *vile affections*, and degenerate Christians to *strong delusions*. Observe the method of conversion implied here, and the steps taken in it. [1.] Sinners are brought to see with their eyes, to discern the reality of divine things and to have some knowledge of them. [2.] To understand with their heart, to apply these things to themselves; not only to assent and approve, but to consent and accept. [3.] To be converted, and effectually turned from sin to Christ, from the world and the flesh to God, as their felicity and

portion. [4.] Then God will heal them, will justify and sanctify them; will pardon their sins, which are as bleeding wounds, and mortify their corruptions, which are as lurking diseases. Now when God denies his grace nothing of this is done; the alienation of the mind from, and its aversion to, God and the divine life, grow into a rooted and invincible antipathy, and so the case becomes desperate.

(2.) Judicial blindness and hardness are in the word of God threatened against those who fully persist in wickedness, and were particularly foretold concerning the Jewish church and nation. Known unto God are all his works, and all ours too. Christ knew before who would betray him, and spoke of it, ch. vi. 70. This is a confirmation of the truth of scripture prophecies, and thus even the unbelief of the Jews may help to strengthen our faith. It is also intended for caution to particular persons, to *beware lest that come upon them which was spoken of in the prophets*, Acts xiii. 40.

(3.) What God has foretold will certainly come to pass, and so, by a necessary consequence, in order of arguing, it might be said that *therefore they could not believe*, because God by the prophets had foretold they would not; for such is the knowledge of God that he cannot be deceived in what he foresees, and such his truth that he cannot deceive in what he foretels, so that the scripture cannot be broken. Yet be it observed that the prophecy did not name particular persons; so that it might not be said, "Therefore such a one and such a one could not believe, because *Esaias* had said so and so;" but it pointed at the body of the Jewish nation, which would persist in their infidelity till their cities were wasted without inhabitants, as it follows (Isa. vi. 11, 12); yet still reserving a remnant (v. 13, *in it shall be a tenth*), which reserve was sufficient to keep a door of hope open to particular persons; for each one might say, Why may not I be of that remnant?

Lastly, The evangelist, having quoted the prophecy, shows (v. 41) that it was intended to look further than the prophet's own days, and that its principal reference was to the days of the Messiah: *These things said Esaias when he saw his glory, and spoke of him*. 1. We read in the prophecy that this was said to *Esaias*, Isa. vi. 8, 9. But here we are told that it was said *by him* to the purpose. For nothing was said by him as a prophet which was not first said to him; nor was any thing said to him which was not afterwards said by him to those to whom he was sent. See Isa. xxi. 10. 2. The vision which the prophet there had of the *glory of God* is here said to be his seeing the glory of Jesus Christ: He saw his glory. Jesus Christ therefore is equal in power and glory with the Father, and his praises are equally celebrated. Christ had a glory before the foundation of the world, and

Esaias saw this. 3. It is said that the prophet there *spoke of him*. It seems to have been spoken of the prophet himself (for to him the commission and instructions were there given), and yet it is here said to be spoken of Christ, for as all the prophets testified of him so they all typified him. This they spoke of him, that as to many his coming would be not only fruitless, but fatal, a savour of death unto death. It might be objected against his doctrine, If it was from heaven, why did not the Jews believe it? But this is an answer to it; it was not for want of evidence, but because their *heart was made fat*, and their *ears were heavy*. It was spoken of Christ, that he should be glorified in the ruin of an unbelieving multitude, as well as in the salvation of a distinguished remnant.

42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Some honour was done to Christ by these rulers: for they *believed on him*, were convinced that he was sent of God, and received his doctrine as divine; but they did not do him honour enough, for they had not courage to own their faith in him. Many professed more kindness for Christ than really they had; these had more kindness for him than they were willing to profess. See here what a struggle was in these rulers between their convictions and their corruptions.

I. See the power of the word in the convictions that many of them were under, who did not wilfully shut their eyes against the light. They *believed on him* as Nicodemus, received him as a teacher come from God. Note, The truth of the gospel has perhaps a better interest in the consciences of men than we are aware of. Many cannot but approve of that in their hearts which yet outwardly they are shy of. Perhaps these chief rulers were *true* believers, though very weak, and their faith like smoking flax. Note, It may be, there are more good people than we think there are. Elijah thought he was left alone, when God had seven thousand faithful worshippers in Israel. Some are really better than they seem to be. Their faults are known, but their repentance is not; a man's goodness may be concealed by a *culpable* yet pardonable weakness, which he himself truly repents of. *The kingdom of God comes not in all with a like observation*; nor have all who are good the same faculty of appearing to be so.

II. See the power of the world in the smothering of these convictions. They believed in Christ, but because of the Pharisees, who had it in their power to do them a dis-kindness, they durst not confess him for fear

of being excommunicated. Observe here,

1. Wherein they failed and were defective: They did not *confess Christ*. Note, There is cause to question the sincerity of that faith which is either afraid or ashamed to show itself; for those who believe with the heart ought to *confess with the mouth*, Rom. x. 9.

2. What they feared: being *put out of the synagogue*, which they thought would be a disgrace and damage to them; as if it would do them any harm to be expelled from a synagogue that had made itself a synagogue of Satan, and from which God was departing.

3. What was at the bottom of this fear: *They loved the praise of men*, chose it as a more valuable good, and pursued it as a more desirable end, than the *praise of God*; which was an implicit idolatry, like that (Rom. i. 25) of *worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator*. They set these two in the scale one against the other, and, having weighed them, they proceeded accordingly.

(1.) They set the praise of men in one scale, and considered how good it was to give praise to men, and to pay a deference to the opinion of the Pharisees, and receive praise from men, to be commended by the chief priests and applauded by the people as good sons of the church, the Jewish church; and they would not confess Christ, lest they should thereby derogate from the reputation of the Pharisees, and forfeit their own, and thus hinder their own preferment. And, besides, the followers of Christ were put into an *ill name*, and were looked upon with contempt, which those who had been used to honour could not bear. Yet perhaps if they had known one another's minds they would have had more courage; but each one thought that if he should declare himself in favour of Christ he should stand alone, and have nobody to back him; whereas, if any one had had resolution to *break the ice*, he would have had more *seconds* than he thought of.

(2.) They put the praise of God in the other scale. They were sensible that by confessing Christ they should both give praise to God, and have praise from God, that he would be pleased with them, and say, *Well done*; but, (3.) They gave the preference to the praise of men, and this turned the scale; sense prevailed above faith, and represented it as more desirable to stand right in the opinion of the Pharisees than to be accepted of God. Note, Love of the praise of men is a very great prejudice to the power and practice of religion and godliness. Many comes short of the glory of God by having a regard to the applause of men, and a value for that. Love of the praise of men, as a by-end in that which is good, will make a man a hypocrite when religion is in fashion and credit is to be got by it; and love of the praise of men, as a base principle in that which is evil, will make a man an apostate when religion is in disgrace, and credit is to be lost for it, as here. See Rom. ii. 29.



44 Jesus cried, and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. 45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. 46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

We have here the honour Christ not assumed, but asserted, to himself, in the account he gave of his mission and his errand into the world. Probably this discourse was not at the same time with that before (for then *he departed*, v. 36), but some time after, when he made another public appearance; and, as this evangelist records it, it was Christ's farewell sermon to the Jews, and his last public discourse; all that follows was private with his disciples. Now observe how our Lord Jesus delivered this parting word: he *cried and said*. *Doth not wisdom cry* (Prov. viii. 1), *cry without?* Prov. i. 20. The raising of his voice and crying intimate, 1. His boldness in speaking. Though they had not courage openly to profess faith in his doctrine, he had courage openly to publish it; if they were ashamed of it, he was not, but set his face as a flint, Isa. l. 7. 2. His earnestness in speaking. He cried as one that was serious and importunate, and in good earnest in what he said, and was willing to impart to them, not only the gospel of God, but *even his own soul*. 3. It denotes his desire that all might take notice of it. This being the last time of the publication of his gospel by himself in person, he makes proclamation, "Whoever will hear me, let them come now." Now what is the conclusion of the whole matter, this closing summary of all Christ's discourses? It is much like that of Moses (Deut. xxx. 15): *See, I have set before you life and death*. So Christ here takes leave of the temple, with a solemn declaration of three things:—

I. The privileges and dignities of those that believe; this gives great encouragement to us to believe in Christ and to profess that

faith. It is a thing of such a nature that we need not be shy either of doing it or of owning it; for,

1. By believing in Christ we are brought into an *honourable acquaintance with God* (v. 44, 45): *He that believes on me, and so sees me, believes on him that sent me, and so sees him*. He that believes on Christ, (1.) He does not believe in a mere man, such a one as he seemed to be, and was generally taken to be, but he believes in one that is the Son of God and equal in power and glory with the Father. Or rather, (2.) His faith does not terminate in Christ, but through him it is carried out to the Father, that sent him, to whom, as our end, we come by Christ as our way. The doctrine of Christ is believed and received as the truth of God. The rest of a believing soul is in God through Christ as Mediator; for its resignation to Christ is in order to its being presented to God. Christianity is made up, not of philosophy nor politics, but pure divinity. This is illustrated, v. 45. *He that sees me* (which is the same with *believing in him*, for faith is the eye of the soul) *sees him that sent me*; in getting an acquaintance with Christ, we come to the knowledge of God. For, [1.] God makes himself known in the face of Christ (2. Cor. iv. 6), who is the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. [2.] All that have a believing sight of Christ are led by him to the knowledge of God, whom Christ has revealed to us by his word and Spirit. Christ, as God, was the image of his Father's person; but Christ, as Mediator, was his Father's representative in his relation to man, the divine light, law, and love, being communicated to us in and through him; so that in seeing him (that is, in eying him as our Saviour, Prince, and Lord, in the right of redemption), we see and eye the Father as our owner, ruler, and benefactor, in the right of creation: for God is pleased to deal with fallen man by proxy.

2. We are hereby brought into a comfortable enjoyment of ourselves (v. 46): *I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes in me, Jew or Gentile, should not abide in darkness*. Observe, (1.) The character of Christ: *I am come a light into the world*, to be a light to it. This implies that he had a being, and a being as light, before he came into the world, as the sun is before it rises; the prophets and apostles were made lights to the world, but it was Christ only that came a light into this world, having before been a glorious light in the upper world, ch. iii. 19. (2.) The comfort of Christians: *They do not abide in darkness*. [1.] They do not continue in that dark condition in which they were by nature; they are *light in the Lord*. They were without any true comfort, or joy, or hope, but do not continue in that condition; light is sown for them. [2.] Whatever darkness of affliction, disquietment, or fear, they may afterwards be in, provision is

made that they may not long abide in it. [3.] They are delivered from that darkness which is perpetual, and which *abideth for ever*, that utter darkness where there is not the least gleam of light nor hope of it.

II. The peril and danger of those that believe not, which gives fair warning to take heed of persisting in unbelief (v. 47, 48): *'If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not, not I only, or not now, lest I should be looked upon as unfair in being judge in my own cause; yet let not infidelity think therefore to go unpunished, though I judge him not, there is one that judgeth him.'* So that we have here the doom of unbelief. Observe,

1. Who they are whose unbelief is here condemned: those who *hear Christ's words* and yet *believe them not*. Those shall not be condemned for their infidelity that never had, nor could have, the gospel; every man shall be judged according to the dispensation of light he was under: *Those that have sinned without law shall be judged without law*. But those that have heard, or might have heard, and would not, lie open to this doom.

2. What is the constructive malignity of their unbelief: not receiving Christ's word; it is interpreted (v. 48) a *rejecting of Christ*, ὁ ἀθετοῦν ἐμὲ. It denotes a rejection with scorn and contempt. Where the banner of the gospel is displayed, no neutrality is admitted; every man is either a subject or an enemy.

3. The wonderful patience and forbearance of our Lord Jesus, exercised towards those who slighted him when he was come here upon earth: *I judge him not, not now*. Note, Christ was not quick or hasty to take advantage against those who refused the first offers of his grace, but continued waiting to be gracious. He did not strike those dumb or dead who contradicted him, never made intercession against Israel, as Elias did; though he had authority to judge, he suspended the execution of it, because he had work of another nature to do first, and that was to *save the world*. (1.) To save effectually those that were given him before he came to judge the degenerate body of mankind. (2.) To offer salvation to all the world, and thus far to save them that it is their own fault if they be not saved. He was to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Now the executing of the power of a judge was not congruous with that undertaking, Acts viii. 33. *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away*, it was suspended for a time.

4. The certain and unavoidable judgment of unbelievers at the great day, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God: unbelief will certainly be a damning sin. Some think when Christ saith, *I judge no man*, he means that they are *condemned already*. There needs no process, they are *self-judged*; no execution, they are *self-ruined*; judgment goes against them of course, Heb. ii 3.

Christ needs not appear against them as their accuser, they are miserable if he do not appear for them as their advocate; however, he tells them plainly when and where they will be reckoned with. (1.) There is *one that judgeth them*. Nothing is more dreadful than abused patience, and grace trampled on; though for awhile *mercy rejoiceth against judgment*, yet there will be *judgment without mercy*. (2.) Their final judgment is reserved to the *last day*; to that day of judgment Christ here binds over all unbelievers, to answer then for all the contempts they have put upon him. Divine justice has *appointed a day*, and adjourns the sentence to that day, as Matt. xxvi. 64. (3.) The word of Christ will judge them then: *The words that I have spoken*, how light soever you have made of them, *the same shall judge the unbeliever in the last day*; as the apostles, the preachers of Christ's word, are said to judge, Luke xxii. 30. Christ's words will judge unbelievers two ways:—[1.] As the evidence of their crime, they will convict them. Every word Christ spoke, every sermon, every argument, every kind offer, will be produced as a testimony against those who slighted all he said. [2.] As the rule of their doom, they will condemn them; they shall be judged according to the tenour of that covenant which Christ procured and published. That word of Christ, *He that believes not shall be damned*, will judge all unbelievers to eternal ruin; and there are *many such like words*.

III. A solemn declaration of the authority Christ had to demand our faith, and require us to receive his doctrine upon pain of damnation, v. 49, 50, where observe,

1. The commission which our Lord Jesus received from the Father to deliver his doctrine to the world (v. 49): *I have not spoken of myself*, as a mere man, much less as a common man; *but the Father gave me a commandment what I should say*. This is the same with what he said ch. vii. 16. *My doctrine is*, (1.) *Not mine*, for *I have not spoken of myself*. Christ, as *Son of man*, did not speak that which was of human contrivance or composure; as Son of God, he did not act separately, or by himself alone, but what he said was the result of the counsels of peace; as Mediator, his coming into the world was voluntary, and with his full consent, but not arbitrary, and of his own head. But, (2.) It was his that sent him. God the Father gave him, [1.] His commission. God sent him as his agent and plenipotentiary, to concert matters between him and man, to set a treaty of peace on foot, and to settle the articles. [2.] His instructions, here called a *commandment*, for they were like those given to an ambassador, directing him not only what he may say, but what he must say. The messenger of the covenant was entrusted with an errand which he must deliver. Note, Our Lord Jesus learned obedience himself, before he taught it to us,



though he was a Son. *The Lord God commanded* the first Adam, and he by his disobedience ruined us; he commanded the second Adam, and he by his obedience saved us. God commanded him what he should say and what he should speak, two words signifying the same thing, to denote that every word was divine. The Old-Testament prophets sometimes spoke of themselves; but Christ spoke by the Spirit at all times. Some make this distinction: He was directed what he should say in his set sermons, and what he should speak in his familiar discourses. Others this: He was directed what he should say in his preaching now, and what he should speak in his judging at the last day; for he had commission and instruction for both.

2. The scope, design, and tendency of this commission: *I know that his commandment is life everlasting, v. 50.* The commission given to Christ had a reference to the everlasting state of the children of men, and was in order to their everlasting life and happiness in that state: the instructions given to Christ as a prophet were to reveal eternal life (1 John v. 11); the power given to Christ as a king was to give eternal life, *ch. xvii. 2.* Thus the command given him was life everlasting. This Christ says he knew: "I know it is so," which intimates how cheerfully and with what assurance Christ pursued his undertaking, knowing very well that he went upon a good errand, and that which would bring forth fruit unto life eternal. It intimates likewise how justly those will perish who reject Christ and his word. Those who disobey Christ despise everlasting life, and renounce it; so that not only Christ's words will judge them, but even their own; so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it; and who can except against it?

3. Christ's exact observance of the commission and instructions given him, and his steady acting in pursuance of them: *Whatsoever I speak, it is as the Father said unto me.* Christ was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God, and was faithful in discovering so much of them to the children of men as it was agreed should be discovered, and kept back nothing that was profitable. As the faithful witness delivers souls, so did he, and spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Note, (1.) This is a great encouragement to faith; the sayings of Christ, rightly understood, are what we may venture our souls upon. (2.) It is a great example of obedience. Christ said as he was bidden, and so must we, communicated what the Father had said to him, and so must we. See Acts iv. 20. In the midst of all the respect paid to him, this is the honour he values himself upon, that what the Father had said to him that he spoke, and in the manner as he was directed so he spoke. This was his glory, that, as a Son, he was faithful to him that appointed him; and, by an un-

feigned belief of every word of Christ, and an entire subjection of soul to it, we must give him the glory due to his name.

### CHAP. XIII.

Our Saviour having finished his public discourses, in which he "endured the contradiction of sinners," now applies himself to a private conversation with his friends, to which he designed the consolation of saints. Henceforward we have an account of what passed between him and his disciples, who were to be entrusted with the affairs of his household, when he was gone into a far country; the necessary instructions and comforts he furnished them with. His hour being at hand, he applies himself to set his house in order. In this chapter, 1. He washes his disciples' feet, *ver. 1—17.* 11. He foretells who should betray him, *ver. 18—30.* 111. He instructs them in the great doctrine of his own death, and the great duty of brotherly love, *ver. 31—35.* 14. He foretells Peter's denying him, *ver. 36—38.*

NOW before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. 2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; 3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; 4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. 6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? 7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. 8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. 9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. 10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. 11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. 12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed you



feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. 16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. 17 If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them.

It has generally been taken for granted by commentators that Christ's washing his disciples' feet, and the discourse that followed it, were the same night in which he was betrayed, and at the same sitting wherein he ate the passover and instituted the Lord's supper; but whether before the solemnity began, or after it was all over, or between the eating of the passover and the institution of the Lord's supper, they are not agreed. This evangelist, making it his business to gather up those passages which the others had omitted, industriously omits those which the others had recorded, which occasions some difficulty in putting them together. If it was then, we suppose that *Judas went out* (v. 30) to get his men ready that were to apprehend the Lord Jesus in the garden. But Dr. Lightfoot is clearly of opinion that this was done and said, even all that is recorded to the end of *ch. xiv.*, not at the passover supper, for it is here said (v. 1) to be *before the feast of the passover*, but at the supper in Bethany, two days before the passover (of which we read *Matt. xxvi. 2—6*), at which Mary the second time anointed Christ's head with the remainder of her box of ointment. Or, it might be at some other supper the night before the passover, not as that was in the house of Simon the leper, but in his own lodgings, where he had none but his disciples about him, and could be more free with them.

In these verses we have the story of Christ's washing his disciples' feet; it was an action of a singular nature; no miracle, unless we call it a miracle of humility. Mary had just anointed his head; now, lest his acceptance of this should look like taking state, he presently balances it with this act of abasement. But why would Christ do this? If the disciples' feet needed washing, they could wash them themselves; a wise man will not do a thing that looks odd and unusual, but for very good causes and considerations. We are sure that it was not in a humour or a frolic that this was done; no, the transaction was very solemn, and carried on with a great deal of seriousness; and four reasons are here intimated why Christ did this:—1. That he might testify his love to his disciples, v. 1, 2. 2. That he might give an instance of his own voluntary humility and condescension, v. 3—5. 3. That he might signify to them spiritual washing, which is referred to in his discourse with Peter, v. 6—11. 4. That he

might set them an example, v. 12—17. And the opening of these four reasons will take in the exposition of the whole story.

I. Christ washed his disciples' feet that he might give a proof of that great love wherewith he loved them; loved them to the end, v. 1, 2.

1. It is here laid down as an undoubted truth that our Lord Jesus, *having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the end*, v. 1.

(1.) This is true of the disciples that were his immediate followers, in particular the twelve. These were his own in the world, his family, his school, his bosom-friends. Children he had none to call his own, but he adopted them, and took them as his own. He had those that were his own in the other world, but he left them for a time, to look after his own in this world. These he loved, he called them into fellowship with himself, conversed familiarly with them, was always tender of them, and of their comfort and reputation. He allowed them to be very free with him, and bore with their infirmities. He loved them to the end, continued his love to them as long as he lived, and after his resurrection; he never took away his loving kindness. Though there were some persons of quality that espoused his cause, he did not lay aside his old friends, to make room for new ones, but still stuck to his poor fishermen. They were weak and defective in knowledge and grace, dull and forgetful; and yet, though he reproved them often, he never ceased to love them and take care of them.

(2.) It is true of all believers, for these twelve patriarchs were the representatives of all the tribes of God's spiritual Israel. Note, [1.] Our Lord Jesus has a people in the world that are his own,—his own, for they were given him by the Father, he has purchased them, and paid dearly for them, and he has set them apart for himself,—his own, for they have devoted themselves to him as a peculiar people. *His own*; where *his own* were spoken of that *received him not*, it is *τα ἰδια*—*his own things*, as a man's cattle are his own, which yet he may, when he pleases, alter the property of. But here it is, *τοὺς ἰδίους*—*his own persons*, as a man's wife and children are his own, to whom he stands in a constant relation. [2.] Christ has a cordial love for his own that are in the world. He *did* love them with a love of goodwill when he gave himself for their redemption. He *does* love them with a love of complacency when he admits them into communion with himself. Though they are *in this world*, a world of darkness and distance, of sin and corruption, yet he loves them. He was now going to his own in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect there; but he seems most concerned for his own on earth, because they most needed his care: the sickly child is most indulged. [3.] Those whom Christ loves *he loves to the end*; he is constant in



his love to his people; he *rests in his love*. He loves with an everlasting love (Jer. xxxi. 3), from everlasting in the counsels of it to everlasting in the consequences of it. Nothing can separate a believer *from the love of Christ*; he loves his own, *εἰς τέλος*—unto perfection, for he will perfect what concerns them, will bring them to that world where love is perfect.

2. Christ manifested his love to them by washing their feet, as that good woman (Luke vii. 38) showed her love to Christ by washing his feet and wiping them. Thus he would show that as his love to them was constant so it was condescending,—that in prosecution of the designs of it he was willing to humble himself,—and that the glories of his exalted state, which he was now entering upon, should be no obstruction at all to the favour he bore to his chosen; and thus he would confirm the promise he had made to all the saints that he would *make them sit down to meat, and would come forth and serve them* (Luke xii. 37), would put honour upon them as great and surprising as for a lord to serve his servants. The disciples had just now betrayed the weakness of their love to him, in grudging the ointment that was poured upon his head (Matt. xxvi. 8), yet he presently gives this proof of his love to them. Our infirmities are foils to Christ's kindnesses, and set them off.

3. He chose this time to do it, a little before his last passover, for two reasons:—

(1.) Because now he knew that his hour was come, which he had long expected, when he should depart out of this world to the Father. Observe here, [1.] The change that was to pass over our Lord Jesus; he must depart. This began at his death, but was completed at his ascension. As Christ himself, so all believers, by virtue of their union with him, when they depart out of the world, are absent from the body, go to the Father, are present with the Lord. It is a departure out of the world, this unkind, injurious world, this faithless, treacherous world—this world of labour, toil, and temptation—this vale of tears; and it is a going to the Father, to the vision of the Father of spirits, and the fruition of him as ours. [2.] The time of this change: *His hour was come*. It is sometimes called his enemies' hour (Luke xxii. 53), the hour of their triumph; sometimes his hour, the hour of his triumph, the hour he had had in his eye all along. The time of his sufferings was fixed to an hour, and the continuance of them but for an hour. [3.] His foresight of it: He knew that his hour was come; he knew from the beginning that it would come, and when, but now he knew that it was come. We know not when our hour will come, and therefore what we have to do in habitual preparation for it ought never to be undone; but, when we know by the harbingers that our hour is come, we must vigorously apply ourselves to an actual pre-

paration, as our Master did, 2 Pet. iii. 14. Now it was in the immediate foresight of his departure that he washed his disciples' feet; that, as his own head was anointed just now against the day of his burial, so their feet might be washed against the day of their consecration by the descent of the Holy Ghost fifty days after, as the priests were washed, Lev. viii. 6. When we see our day approaching, we should do what good we can to those we leave behind.

(2.) Because the devil had now put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, v. 2. These words in a parenthesis may be considered, [1.] As tracing Judas's treason to its origin; it was a sin of such a nature that it evidently bore the devil's image and superscription. What way of access the devil has to men's hearts, and by what methods he darts in his suggestions, and mingles them undiscerned with those thoughts which are the natives of the heart, we cannot tell. But there are some sins in their own nature so exceedingly sinful, and to which there is so little temptation from the world and the flesh, that it is plain Satan lays the egg of them in a heart disposed to be the nest to hatch them in. For Judas to betray such a master, to betray him so cheaply and upon no provocation, was such downright enmity to God as could not be forged but by Satan himself, who thereby thought to ruin the Redeemer's kingdom, but did in fact ruin his own. [2.] As intimating a reason why Christ now washed his disciples' feet. First, Judas being now resolved to betray him, the time of his departure could not be far off; if this matter be determined, it is easy to infer with St. Paul, *I am now ready to be offered*. Note, The more malicious we perceive our enemies to be against us, the more industrious we should be to prepare for the worst that may come. Secondly, Judas being now got into the snare, and the devil aiming at Peter and the rest of them (Luke xxii. 31), Christ would fortify his own against him. If the wolf has seized one of the flock, it is time for the shepherd to look well to the rest. Antidotes must be stirring, when the infection is begun. Dr. Lightfoot observes that the disciples had learned of Judas to murmur at the anointing of Christ; compare ch. xii. 4, &c. with Matt. xxvi. 8. Now, lest those that had learned that of him should learn worse, he fortifies them by a lesson of humility against his most dangerous assaults. Thirdly, Judas, who was now plotting to betray him, was one of the twelve. Now Christ would hereby show that he did not design to cast them all off for the faults of one. Though one of their college had a devil, and was a traitor, yet they should fare never the worse for that. Christ loves his church though there are hypocrites in it, and had still a kindness for his disciples though there was a Judas among them and he knew it.

II. Christ washed his disciples' feet that

he might give an instance of his own wonderful humility, and show how lowly and condescending he was, and let all the world know how low he could stoop in love to his own. This is intimated, *v.* 3—5. *Jesus knowing*, and now actually considering, and perhaps discoursing of, his honours as Mediator, and telling his friends that *the Father had given all things into his hand, rises from supper*, and, to the great surprise of the company, who wondered what he was going to do, *washed his disciples' feet*.

1. Here is the rightful advancement of the Lord Jesus. Glorious things are here said of Christ as Mediator.

(1.) *The Father had given all things into his hands*; had given him a propriety in all, and a power over all, as possessor of heaven and earth, in pursuance of the great designs of his undertaking; see *Matt.* xi. 27. The accommodation and arbitration of all matters in variance between God and man were committed into his hands as the great umpire and referee; and the administration of the kingdom of God among men, in all the branches of it, was committed to him; so that all acts, both of government and judgment, were to pass through his hands; he is *heir of all things*.

(2.) *He came from God*. This implies that he was in the beginning with God, and had a being and glory, not only before he was born into this world, but before the world itself was born; and that when he came into the world he came as God's ambassador, with a commission from him. He came from God as the Son of God, and the sent of God. The Old-Testament prophets were raised up and employed for God, but Christ came directly from him.

(3.) *He went to God*, to be glorified with him with the same glory which he had with God from eternity. That which comes from God shall go to God; those that are born from heaven are bound for heaven. As Christ came from God to be an agent for him on earth, so he went to God to be an agent for us in heaven; and it is a comfort to us to think how welcome he was there: he was brought near to the *Ancient of days*, *Dan.* vii. 13. And it was said to him, *Sit thou at my right hand*, *Ps.* cx. 1.

(4.) *He knew all this*; was not like a prince in the cradle, that knows nothing of the honour he is born to, or like Moses, who *wist not that his face shone*; no, he had a full view of all the honours of his exalted state, and yet stooped thus low. But how does this come in here? [1.] As an inducement to him now quickly to leave what lessons and legacies he had to leave to his disciples, because his hour was now come when he must take his leave of them, and be exalted above that familiar converse which he now had with them, *v.* 1. [2.] It may come in as that which supported him under his sufferings, and carried him cheerfully through this sharp

encounter. Judas was now betraying him, and he knew it, and knew what would be the consequence of it; yet, knowing also *that he came from God and went to God*, he did not draw back, but went on cheerfully. [3.] It seems to come in as a foil to his condescension, to make it the more admirable. The reasons of divine grace are sometimes represented in scripture as strange and surprising (as *Isa.* lvii. 17, 18; *Hos.* ii. 13, 14); so here, that is given as an inducement to Christ to stoop which should rather have been a reason for his taking state; for God's thoughts are not as ours. Compare with this those passages which preface the most signal instances of condescending grace with the displays of divine glory, as *Ps.* lxxviii. 4, 5; *Isa.* lvii. 15; *lxvi.* 1, 2.

2. Here is the voluntary abasement of our Lord Jesus notwithstanding this. *Jesus knowing* his own glory as God, and his own authority and power as Mediator, one would think it should follow, *He rises from supper*, lays aside his ordinary garments, calls for robes, bids them keep their distance, and do him homage; but no, quite the contrary, when he considered this he gave the greatest instance of humility. Note, A well-grounded assurance of heaven and happiness, instead of puffing a man up with pride, will make and keep him very humble. Those that would be found conformable to Christ, and partakers of his Spirit, must study to keep their minds low in the midst of the greatest advancements. Now that which Christ humbled himself to was *to wash his disciples' feet*.

(1.) The action itself was mean and servile, and that which servants of the lowest rank were employed in. *Let thine handmaid* (saith Abigail) *be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord*; let me be in the meanest employment, *1 Sam.* xxv. 41. If he had washed their hands or faces, it had been great condescension (Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah, *2 Kings* iii. 11); but for Christ to stoop to such a piece of drudgery as this may well excite our admiration. Thus he would teach us to think nothing below us wherein we may be serviceable to God's glory and the good of our brethren.

(2.) The condescension was so much the greater that he did this for his own disciples, who in themselves were of a low and despicable condition, not curious about their bodies; their feet, it is likely, were seldom washed, and therefore very dirty. In relation to him, they were his scholars, his servants, and such as should have washed his feet, whose dependence was upon him, and their expectations from him. Many of great spirits otherwise will do a mean thing to curry favour with their superiors; they rise by stooping, and climb by cringing; but for Christ to do this to *his disciples* could be no act of policy nor complaisance, but pure humility.

(3.) *He rose from supper* to do it. Though we translate it (*v.* 2) *supper being ended*, it



might be better read, *there being a supper made, or he being at supper*, for he sat down again (v. 12), and we find him dipping a sop (v. 26), so that he did it in the midst of his meal, and thereby taught us, [1.] Not to reckon it a disturbance, nor any just cause of uneasiness, to be called from our meal to do God or our brother any real service, esteeming the discharge of our duty *more than our necessary food*, ch. iv. 34. Christ would not leave his preaching to oblige his nearest relations (Mark iii. 33), but would leave his supper to show his love to his disciples. [2.] Not to be over nice about our meat. It would have turned many a squeamish stomach to wash dirty feet at supper-time; but Christ did it, not that we might learn to be rude and slovenly (cleanliness and godliness will do well together), but to teach us not to be curious, not to indulge, but mortify, the delicacy of the appetite, giving good manners their due place, and no more.

(4.) He put himself into the garb of a servant, to do it: he *laid aside* his loose and upper garments, that he might apply himself to this service the more expeditely. We must address ourselves to duty as those that are resolved not to take state, but to take pains; we must divest ourselves of every thing that would either feed our pride or hang in our way and hinder us in what we have to do, must *gird up the loins of our mind*, as those that in earnest buckle to business.

(5.) He did it with all the humble ceremony that could be, went through all the parts of the service distinctly, and passed by none of them; he did it as if he had been used thus to serve; did it himself alone, and had none to minister to him in it. He *girded himself with the towel*, as servants throw a napkin on their arm, or put an apron before them; he *poured water into the basin* out of the water-pots that stood by (ch. ii. 6), and then *washed their feet*; and, to complete the service, *wiped them*. Some think that he did not wash the feet of them all, but only four or five of them, that being thought sufficient to answer the end; but I see nothing to countenance this conjecture, for in other places where he did make a difference it is taken notice of; and his washing the feet of them *all*, without exception, teaches us a catholic and extensive charity to all Christ's disciples, even the least.

(6.) Nothing appears to the contrary but that he washed the feet of Judas among the rest, for he was present, v. 26. It is the character of a *widow indeed* that she had washed the saints' feet (1 Tim. v. 10), and there is some comfort in this; but the blessed Jesus here washed the feet of a sinner, the worst of sinners, the worst to him, who was at this time contriving to betray him.

Many interpreters consider Christ's washing his disciples' feet as a representation of his whole undertaking. He knew that he was equal with God, and all things were his; and

yet he rose from his table in glory, laid aside his robes of light, girded himself with our nature, took upon him the form of a servant, *came not to be ministered to, but to minister*, poured out his blood, poured out his soul unto death, and thereby prepared a laver to wash us from our sins, Rev. i. 5.

III. Christ washed his disciples' feet that he might signify to them spiritual washing, and the cleansing of the soul from the pollutions of sin. This is plainly intimated in his discourse with Peter upon it, v. 6—11, in which we may observe,

1. The surprise Peter was in when he saw his Master go about this mean service (v. 6): *Then cometh he to Simon Peter*, with his towel and basin, and bids him put out his feet to be washed. Chrysostom conjectures that he first washed the feet of Judas, who readily admitted the honour, and was pleased to see his Master so disparage himself. It is most probable that when he *went about* this service (which is all that is meant by his *beginning* to wash, v. 5) he took Peter first, and that the rest would not have suffered it, if they had not first heard it explained in what passed between Christ and Peter. Whether Christ came first to Peter or no, when he did come to him, Peter was startled at the proposal: *Lord (saith he) dost thou wash my feet?* Here is an emphasis to be laid upon the persons, *thou and me*; and the placing of the words is observable, *τί μου—what, thou mine? Tu mihi lavas pedes? Quid est tu? Quid est mihi? Cogitanda sunt potius quam dicenda—Dost thou wash my feet? What is it thou? What to me? These things are rather to be contemplated than uttered.*—Aug. in loc. What thou, our Lord and Master, whom we know and believe to be the Son of God, and Saviour and ruler of the world, do this for me, a worthless worm of the earth, a *sinful man*, O Lord? Shall those hands wash my feet which with a touch have cleansed lepers, given sight to the blind, and raised the dead? So Theophylact, and from him Dr. Taylor. Very willingly would Peter have taken the basin and towel, and washed his Master's feet, and been proud of the honour, Luke xvii. 7, 8. "This had been natural and regular; for my Master to wash my feet is such a solecism as never was; such a paradox as I cannot understand. *Is this the manner of men?*" Note, Christ's condescensions, especially his condescensions to us, wherein we find ourselves taken notice of by his grace, are justly the matter of our admiration, ch. xiv. 22. *Who am I, Lord God? And what is my father's house?*

2. The immediate satisfaction Christ gave to this question of surprise. This was at least sufficient to silence his objections (v. 7): *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* Here are two reasons why Peter must submit to what Christ was doing:—

(1.) Because he was at present in the *charu*



concerning it, and ought not to oppose what he did not understand, but acquiesce in the will and wisdom of one who could give a good reason for all he said and did. Christ would teach Peter an *implicit obedience*: "*What I do thou knowest not now*, and therefore art no competent judge of it, but must believe it is well done because I do it." Note, Consciousness to ourselves of the darkness we labour under, and our inability to judge of what God does, should make us sparing and modest in our censures of his proceedings; see Heb. xi. 8.

(2.) Because there was something considerable in it, of which he should hereafter know the meaning: "*Thou shalt know hereafter* what need thou hast of being washed, when thou shalt be guilty of the heinous sin of denying me;" so some. "Thou shalt know, when, in the discharge of the office of an apostle, thou wilt be employed in washing off from those under thy charge the sins and defilements of their earthly affections;" so Dr. Hammond. Note, [1.] Our Lord Jesus does many things the meaning of which even his own disciples do not for the present know, but they *shall know afterwards*. What he did when he became man for us and what he did when he became a worm and no man for us, what he did when he lived our life and what he did when he laid it down, could not be understood till afterwards, and then it appeared that *it behoved him*, Heb. ii. 17. Subsequent providences explain preceding ones; and we see afterwards what was the kind tendency of events that seemed most cross; and the way which we thought was *about* proved the *right way*. [2.] Christ's washing his disciples' feet had a significancy in it, which they themselves did not understand till afterwards, when Christ explained it to be a specimen of the laver of regeneration, and till the Spirit was poured out upon them from on high. We must let Christ take his own way, both in ordinances and providences, and we shall find in the issue it was the best way.

3. Peter's peremptory refusal, notwithstanding this, to let Christ wash his feet (v. 8): *Thou shalt by no means wash my feet; no, never*. So it is in the original. It is the language of a fixed resolution. Now, (1.) Here was a show of humility and modesty. Peter herein seemed to have, and no doubt he really had, a great respect for his Master, as he had, Luke v. 8. Thus many are beguiled of their reward in a *voluntary humility* (Col. ii. 18, 23), such a self-denial as Christ neither appoints nor accepts; for, (2.) Under this show of humility there was a real contradiction to the will of the Lord Jesus: "*I will wash thy feet*," saith Christ; "But thou never shalt," saith Peter, "it is not a fitting thing;" so making himself wiser than Christ. It is not humility, but infidelity, to put away the offers of the gospel, as if too rich to be made to us or too good news to be true.

4. Christ's insisting upon his offer, and a good reason given to Peter why he should accept it: *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*. This may be taken, (1.) As a severe caution against disobedience: "*If I wash thee not*, if thou continue refractory, and wilt not comply with thy Master's will in so small a matter, thou shalt not be owned as one of my disciples, but be justly discarded and cashiered for not observing orders." Thus several of the ancients understand it; if Peter will make himself wiser than his Master, and dispute the commands he ought to obey, he does in effect renounce his allegiance, and say, as they did, *What portion have we in David*, in the Son of David? And so shall his doom be, he shall have no part in him. Let him use no more manners than will do him good, for *to obey is better than sacrifice*, 1 Sam. xv. 22. Or, (2.) As a declaration of the necessity of spiritual washing; and so I think it is to be understood: "*If I wash not thy soul from the pollution of sin, thou hast no part with me*, no interest in me, no communion with me, no benefit by me." Note, All those, and those only, that are spiritually washed by Christ, have a part in Christ. [1.] To have a part in Christ, or with Christ, has all the happiness of a Christian bound up in it, to be *partakers of Christ* (Heb. iii. 14), to share in those inestimable privileges which result from a union with him and relation to him. It is that *good part* the having of which is the *one thing needful*. [2.] It is necessary to our having a part in Christ that he wash us. All those whom Christ owns and saves he justifies and sanctifies, and both are included in his washing them. We cannot partake of his glory if we partake not of his merit and righteousness, and of his Spirit and grace.

5. Peter's more than submission, his earnest request, to be washed by Christ, v. 9. If this be the meaning of it, *Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head*. How soon is Peter's mind changed! When the mistake of his understanding was rectified, the corrupt resolution of his will was soon altered. Let us therefore not be peremptory in any resolve (except in our resolve to follow Christ), because we may soon see cause to retract it, but cautious in taking up a purpose we will be tenacious of. Observe, (1.) How ready Peter is to recede from what he had said: "Lord, what a fool was I to speak such a hasty word!" Now that the washing of him appeared to be an act of Christ's authority and grace he admits it; but disliked it when it seemed only an act of humiliation. Note, [1.] Good men, when they see their error, will not be loth to recant it. [2.] Sooner or later, Christ will bring all to be of his mind.

(2.) How importunate he is for the purifying grace of the Lord Jesus, and the universal influence of it, even upon his hands and head. Note, A divorce from Christ, and an



exclusion from having a part in him, is the most formidable evil in the eyes of all that are enlightened, for the fear of which they will be persuaded to any thing. And for fear of this we should be earnest with God in prayer, that he will wash us, will justify and sanctify us. "Lord, that I may not be cut off from thee, make me fit for thee, by the washing of regeneration. *Lord, wash not my feet only from the gross pollutions that cleave to them, but also my hands and my head from the spots which they have contracted, and the undiscerned filth which proceeds by perspiration from the body itself.*" Note, Those who truly desire to be sanctified desire to be sanctified throughout, and to have the whole man, with all its parts and powers, purified, 1 Thess. v. 23.

6. Christ's further explication of this sign, as it represented spiritual washing.

(1.) With reference to his disciples that were faithful to him (v. 10): *He that is washed all over in the bath* (as was frequently practised in those countries), when he returns to his house, *needeth not save to wash his feet*, his hands and head having been washed, and he having only dirtied his feet in walking home. Peter had gone from one extreme to the other. At first he would not let Christ wash his feet; and now he overlooks what Christ had done for him in his baptism, and what was signified thereby, and cries out to have his hands and head washed. Now Christ directs him into the meaning; he must have his feet washed, but not his hands and head. [1.] See here what is the comfort and privilege of such as are in a justified state; they are washed by Christ, and are *clean every whit*, that is, they are graciously accepted of God, as if they were so; and, though they offend, yet they need not, upon their repentance, be again put into a justified state, for then should they often be baptized. The evidence of a justified state may be clouded, and the comfort of it suspended, when yet the charter of it is not vacated or taken away. Though we have occasion to repent daily. God's gifts and callings are without repentance. The heart may be swept and garnished, and yet still remain the devil's palace; but, if it be washed, it belongs to Christ, and he will not lose it. [2.] See what ought to be the daily care of those who through grace are in a justified state, and that is to wash their feet; to cleanse themselves from the guilt they contract daily through infirmity and inadvertence, by the renewed exercise of repentance, with a believing application of the virtue of Christ's blood. We must also wash our feet by constant watchfulness against every thing that is defiling, for we must cleanse our way, and cleanse our feet *by taking heed thereto*, Ps. cxix. 9. The priests, when they were consecrated, were washed with water; and, though they did not need afterwards to be so washed all over, yet, whenever they went in to minis-

ter, they must wash their feet and hands at the laver, on pain of death, Exod. xxx. 19, 20. The provision made for our cleansing should not make us presumptuous, but the more cautious. *I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* From yesterday's pardon, we should fetch an argument against this day's temptation.

(2.) With reflection upon Judas: *And you are clean, but not all*, v. 10, 11. He pronounces his disciples clean, *clean through the word he had spoken to them*, ch. xv. 3. He washed them himself, and then said, *You are clean*; but he excepts Judas: *not all*; they were all baptized, even Judas, yet not all clean; many have the sign that have not the thing signified. Note, [1.] Even among those who are called disciples of Christ, and profess relation to him, there are some who are not clean, Prov. xxx. 12. [2.] The Lord knows those that are his, and those that are not, 2 Tim. ii. 19. The eye of Christ can separate between the precious and the vile, the clean and the unclean. [3.] When those that have called themselves disciples afterwards prove traitors, their apostasy at last is a certain evidence of their hypocrisy all along. [4.] Christ sees it necessary to let his disciples know that they are not all clean; that we may all be jealous over ourselves (*Is it I? Lord, is it I that am among the clean, yet not clean?*) and that, when hypocrites are discovered, it may be no surprise nor stumbling to us.

IV. Christ washed his disciples' feet to set before us an example. This explication he gave of what he had done, when he had done it, v. 12—17. Observe,

1. With what solemnity he gave an account of the meaning of what he had done (v. 12): *After he had washed their feet*, he said, *Know you what I have done?*

(1.) He adjourned the explication till he had finished the transaction, [1.] To try their submission and implicit obedience. What he did they should not know till afterwards, that they might learn to acquiesce in his will when they could not give a reason for it. [2.] Because it was proper to finish the riddle before he unriddled it. Thus, as to his whole undertaking, when his sufferings were finished, when he had resumed the garments of his exalted state and was ready to sit down again, then he *opened the understandings of his disciples*, and poured out his Spirit, Luke xxiv. 45, 46.

(2.) Before he explained it, he asked them if they could construe it: *Know you what I have done to you?* He put this question to them, not only to make them sensible of their ignorance, and the need they had to be instructed (as Zech. iv. 5, 13, *Knowest thou not what these be? and I said, No, my Lord*), but to raise their desires and expectations of instruction: "*I would have you know*, and, if you will give attention, I will tell you." Note. It is the will of Christ that sacramental signs should be explained, and that his people

should be acquainted with the meaning of them; otherwise, though ever so significant, to those who know not the thing signified they are insignificant. Hence they are directed to ask, *What mean you by this service?* Exod. xii. 26.

2. Upon what he grounds that which he had to say (v. 13): "*You call me Master and Lord*, you give me those titles, in speaking of me, in speaking to me, and *you say well*, for *so I am*; you are in the relation of scholars to me, and I do the part of a master to you." Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is our Master and Lord; he that is our Redeemer and Saviour is, in order to that, our Lord and Master. He is our Master, *διδάσκαλος*—our teacher and instructor in all necessary truths and rules, as a prophet revealing to us the will of God. He is our Lord, *κύριος*—our ruler and owner, that has authority over us and propriety in us. (2.) It becomes the disciples of Christ to call him Master and Lord, not in compliment, but in reality; not by constraint, but with delight. Devout Mr. Herbert, when he mentioned the name of Christ, used to add, my Master; and thus expresses himself concerning it in one of his poems:

How sweetly doth my Master sound, my Master!  
As ambergris leaves a rich scent unto the taster,  
So do these words a sweet content, an oriental  
fragrancy, my Master.

(3.) Our calling Christ Master and Lord is an obligation upon us to receive and observe the instructions he gives us. Christ would thus pre-engage their obedience to a command that was displeasing to flesh and blood. If Christ be our Master and Lord, be so by our own consent, and we have often called him so, we are bound in honour and honesty to be observant of him.

3. The lesson which he hereby taught: *You also ought to wash one another's feet*, v. 14.

(1.) Some have understood this literally, and have thought these words amount to the institution of a standing ordinance in the church; that Christians should, in a solemn religious manner, *wash one another's feet*, in token of their condescending love to one another. St. Ambrose took it so, and practised it in the church of Milan. St. Austin saith that those Christians who did not do it with their hands, yet (he hoped) did it with their hearts in humility; but he saith, It is much better to do it with the hands also, when there is occasion, as 1 Tim. v. 10. What Christ has done Christians should not disdain to do. Calvin saith that the pope, in the annual observance of this ceremony on Thursday in the passion week, is rather Christ's ape than his follower, for the duty enjoined, in conformity to Christ, was *mutual*: *Wash one another's feet*. And Jansenius saith, It is done, *Frigidè et dissimiliter—Frigidly, and unlike the primitive model*.

(2.) But doubtless it is to be understood figuratively; it is an instructive sign, but

not sacramental, as the eucharist. This was a parable to the eye; and three things our Master hereby designed to teach us:—[1.] A humble condescension. We must learn of our Master to be *lowly in heart* (Matt. xi. 29), and walk with all lowliness; we must think meanly of ourselves and respectfully of our brethren, and deem nothing below us but sin; we must say of that which seems mean, but has a tendency to the glory of God and our brethren's good, as David (2 Sam. vi. 22), *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile*. Christ had often taught his disciples humility, and they had forgotten the lesson; but now he teaches them in such a way as surely they could never forget. [2.] A condescension to be serviceable. To wash one another's feet is to stoop to the meanest offices of love, for the real good and benefit one of another, as blessed Paul, who, though free from all, made himself *servant of all*; and the blessed Jesus, who *came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*. We must not grudge to take care and pains, and to spend time, and to diminish ourselves for the good of those to whom we are not under any particular obligations, even of our inferiors, and such as are not in a capacity of making us any requital. Washing the feet after travelling contributes both to the decency of the person and to his ease, so that to wash one another's feet is to consult both the credit and the comfort one of another, to do what we can both to advance our brethren's reputation and to make their minds easy. See 1 Cor. x. 24; Heb. vi. 10. The duty is *mutual*; we must both accept help from our brethren and afford help to our brethren. [3.] A serviceableness to the sanctification one of another: *You ought to wash one another's feet*, from the pollutions of sin. Austin takes it in this sense, and many others. We cannot satisfy for one another's sins, this is peculiar to Christ, but we may help to purify one another from sin. We must in the first place wash ourselves; this charity must begin at home (Matt. vii. 5), but it must not end there; we must sorrow for the failings and follies of our brethren, much more for their gross pollutions (1 Cor. v. 2), must wash our brethren's polluted feet in tears. We must faithfully reprove them, and do what we can to bring them to repentance (Gal. vi. 1), and we must admonish them, to prevent their falling into the mire; this is washing their feet.

4. Here is the ratifying and enforcing of this command from the example of what Christ had now done: *If I your Lord and Master have done it to you, you ought to do it to one another*. He shows the cogency of this argument in two things:—

(1.) I am *your Master*, and you are my disciples, and therefore you ought to *learn of me* (v. 15); for in this, as in other things, I have given you an example, that you should do to others *as I have done to you*. Observe,



[1.] What a good teacher Christ is. He teaches by example as well as doctrine, and for this end came into this world, and dwelt among us, that he might set us a copy of all those graces and duties which his holy religion teaches; and it is a copy without one false stroke. Hereby he made his own laws more intelligible and honourable. Christ is a commander like Gideon, who said to his soldiers, *Look on me, and do likewise* (Judg. vii. 17); like Abimelech, who said, *What you have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done* (Judg. ix. 48); and like Cæsar, who called his soldiers, not *militēs*—soldiers, but *commilitōnes*—fellow-soldiers, and whose usual word was, not *Ite illuc*, but *Venite huc*; not *Go*, but *Come*. [2.] What good scholars we must be. We must do as he hath done; for therefore he gave us a copy, that we should write after it, that we might be as he was in this world (1 John iv. 17), and walk as he walked, 1 John ii. 6. Christ's example herein is to be followed by ministers in particular, in whom the graces of humility and holy love should especially appear, and by the exercise thereof they effectually serve the interests of their Master and the ends of their ministry. When Christ sent his apostles abroad as his agents, it was with this charge, that they should not take state upon them, nor carry things with a high hand, but *become all things to all men*, 1 Cor. ix. 22. What I have done to your dirty feet that do you to the polluted souls of sinners; *wash them*. Some who suppose this to have been done at the passover supper think it intimates a rule in admitting communicants to the Lord's-supper, to see that they be first washed and cleansed by reformation and a blameless conversation, and then take them in to *compass God's altar*. But all Christians likewise are here taught to condescend to each other in love, and to do it as Christ did it, unasked, unpaid; we must not be mercenary in the services of love, nor do them with reluctancy.

(2.) I am your Master, and you are my disciples, and therefore you cannot think it below you to do that, how mean soever it may seem, which you have seen me do, for (v. 16) *the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent*, though sent with all the pomp and power of an ambassador, *greater than he that sent him*. Christ had urged this (Matt. x. 24, 25) as a reason why they should not think it strange if they suffered as he did; here he urges it as a reason why they should not think it much to humble themselves as he did. What he did not think a disparagement to him, they must not think a disparagement to them. Perhaps the disciples were inwardly disgusted at this precept of washing one another's feet, as inconsistent with the dignity they expected shortly to be preferred to. To obviate such thoughts, Christ reminds them of their place as his servants; they were not better men than

their Master, and what was consistent with his dignity was much more consistent with theirs. If he was humble and condescending, it ill became them to be proud and assuming. Note, [1.] We must take good heed to ourselves, lest Christ's gracious condescensions to us, and advancements of us, through the corruption of nature occasion us to entertain high thoughts of ourselves or low thoughts of him. We need to be put in mind of this, that we are not *greater than our Lord*. [2.] Whatever our Master was pleased to condescend to in favour to us, we should much more condescend to in conformity to him. Christ, by humbling himself, has dignified humility, and put an honour upon it, and obliged his followers to think nothing below them but sin. We commonly say to those who disdain to do such or such a thing, As good as you have done it, and been never the worse thought of; and true indeed it is, if our Master has done it. When we see our Master serving, we cannot but see how ill it becomes us to be domineering.

5. Our Saviour closes this part of his discourse with an intimation of the necessity of their obedience to these instructions: *If you know these things*; or, seeing you know them, *happy are you if you do them*. Most people think, Happy are those that rise and rule. Washing one another's feet will never get estates and preferments; but Christ saith, notwithstanding this, Happy are those that stoop and obey. *If you know these things*. This may be understood either as intimating a doubt whether they knew them or no; so strong was their conceit of a temporal kingdom that it was a question whether they could entertain the notion of a duty so contrary to that conceit. Or, as taking it for granted that they did know these things; since they had such excellent precepts given them, recommended by such an excellent pattern, it will be necessary to the completing of their happiness that they practise accordingly. (1.) This is applicable to the commands of Christ in general. Note, Though it is a great advantage to know our duty, yet we shall come short of happiness if we do not do our duty. Knowing is in order to doing; that knowledge therefore is vain and fruitless which is not reduced to practice; nay, it will aggravate the sin and ruin, Luke xii. 47, 48; James iv. 17. It is knowing and doing that will demonstrate us of *Christ's kingdom*, and wise builders. See Ps. ciii. 17, 18. (2.) It is to be applied especially to this command of humility and serviceableness. Nothing is better known, nor more readily acknowledged, than this, that we should be humble; and therefore, though many will own themselves to be passionate and intemperate, few will own themselves to be proud, for it is as inexcusable a sin, and as hateful, as any other; and yet how little is to be seen of true humility, and that mutual subjection and condescension upon

which the law of Christ so much insists! Most know these things so well as to expect that others should do accordingly to them, yield to them, and serve them, but not so well as to do so themselves.

18 I speak not of you all : I know whom I have chosen : but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. 19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*. 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. 21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. 22 Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. 23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. 25 He then lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it? 26 Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. 27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. 28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. 29 For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. 30 He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

We have here the discovery of Judas's plot to betray his Master. Christ knew it from the beginning; but now first he discovered it to his disciples, who did not expect Christ should be betrayed, though he had often told them so, much less did they suspect that one of them should do it. Now here,

I. Christ gives them a general intimation of it (v. 18): *I speak not of you all*, I cannot

expect you will all do these things, for *I know whom I have chosen*, and whom I have passed by; but the scripture will be fulfilled (Ps. xli. 9), *He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me*. He does not yet speak out, either of the crime or the criminal, but raises their expectations of a further discovery.

1. He intimates to them that they were not all right. He had said (v. 10), *You are clean, but not all*. So here, *I speak not of you all*. Note, What is said of the excellencies of Christ's disciples cannot be said of all that are called so. The word of Christ is a distinguishing word, which separates *between cattle and cattle*, and will distinguish thousands into hell who flattered themselves with hopes that they were going to heaven. *I speak not of you all*; you my disciples and followers. Note, There is a mixture of bad with good in the best societies, a Judas among the apostles; it will be so till we come to the blessed society into which shall enter nothing unclean or disguised.

2. That he himself knew who were right, and who were not: *I know whom I have chosen*, who the few are that are chosen among the many that are called with the common call. Note, (1.) Those that are chosen, Christ himself had the choosing of them; he nominated the persons he undertook for. (2.) Those that are chosen are known to Christ, for he never forgets any whom he has once had in his thoughts of love, 2 Tim. ii. 19.

3. That in the treachery of him that proved false to him the scripture was fulfilled, which takes off very much both the surprise and offence of the thing. Christ took one into his family whom he foresaw to be a traitor, and did not by effectual grace prevent his being so, *that the scripture might be fulfilled*. Let it not therefore be a stumbling-block to any; for, though it do not at all lessen Judas's offence, it may lessen our offence at it. The scripture referred to is David's complaint of the treachery of some of his enemies; the Jewish expositors, and ours from them, generally understand it of Ahithophel: Grotius thinks it intimates that the death of Judas would be like that of Ahithophel. But because that psalm speaks of David's sickness, of which we read nothing at the time of Ahithophel's deserting him, it may better be understood of some other friend of his, that proved false to him. This our Saviour applies to Judas. (1.) Judas, as an apostle, was admitted to the highest privilege: he did *eat bread with Christ*. He was familiar with him, and favoured by him, was one of his family, one of those with whom he was intimately conversant. David saith of his treacherous friend, He did *eat of my bread*; but Christ, being poor, had no bread he could properly call his own. He saith, He did *eat bread with me*; such as he had by the kindness of his friends, that ministered to him, his disciples had their share



of, Judas among the rest. Wherever he went, Judas was welcome with him, did not dine among servants, but sat at table with his Master, ate of the same dish, drank of the same cup, and in all respects fared as he fared. He ate miraculous bread with him, when the loaves were multiplied, ate the passover with him. Note, All that eat bread with Christ are not his disciples indeed. See 1 Cor. x. 3—5. (2.) Judas, as an apostate, was guilty of the basest treachery: he *lifted up the heel* against Christ. [1.] He forsook him, turned his back upon him, went out from the society of his disciples, v. 30. [2.] He despised him, shook off the dust of his feet against him, in contempt of him and his gospel. Nay, [3.] He became an enemy to him; spurned at him, as wrestlers do at their adversaries, whom they would overthrow. Note, It is no new thing for those that were Christ's seeming friends to prove his real enemies. Those who pretended to magnify him magnify themselves against him, and thereby prove themselves guilty, not only of the basest ingratitude, but the basest treachery and perfidiousness.

II. He gives them a reason why he told them beforehand of the treachery of Judas (v. 19): "*Now I tell you before it come*, before Judas has begun to put his wicked plot in execution, *that when it is come to pass you may*, instead of stumbling at it, be confirmed in your belief that I am he, he that should come." 1. By his clear and certain foresight of things to come, of which in this, as in other instances, he gave incontestable proof, he proved himself to be the true God, before whom all things are naked and open. Christ foretold that Judas would betray him when there was no ground to suspect such a thing, and so proved himself the eternal Word, which is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*. The prophecies of the New Testament concerning the apostasy of the latter times (which we have, 2 Thess. ii.; 1 Tim. iv., and in the Apocalypse) being evidently accomplished is a proof that those writings were divinely inspired, and confirms our faith in the whole canon of scripture. 2. By this application of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament to himself, he proved himself to be the true Messiah, to whom *all the prophets bore witness*. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and he suffered just as it was written, Luke xxiv. 25, 26; ch. viii. 28.

III. He gives a word of encouragement to his apostles, and all his ministers whom he employs in his service (v. 20): "*He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me*. The purport of these words is the same with what we have in other scriptures, but it is not easy to make out their coherence here. Christ had told his disciples that they must humble and abase themselves. "Now," saith he, "though there may be those that will despise you for your condescension, yet there

will be those that will do you honour, and shall be honoured for so doing." Those who know themselves dignified by Christ's commission may be content to be vilified in the world's opinion. Or, he intended to silence the scruples of those who, because there was a traitor among the apostles, would be shy of receiving any of them; for, if one of them was false to his Master, to whom would any of them be true? *Ex uno disce omnes—They are all alike*. No, as Christ will think never the worse of them for Judas's crime, so he will stand by them, and own them, and will raise up such as shall receive them. Those that had received Judas when he was a preacher, and perhaps were converted and edified by his preaching, were never the worse, nor should reflect upon it with any regret, though he afterwards proved a traitor; for he was one whom Christ sent. We cannot know what men are, much less what they will be, but those who appear to be sent of Christ we must receive, till the contrary appear. Though some, by entertaining strangers, have entertained robbers unawares, yet we must still be hospitable, for thereby some have entertained angels. The abuses put upon our charity, though ordered with ever so much discretion, will neither justify our uncharitableness, nor lose us the reward of our charity. 1. We are here encouraged to receive ministers as sent of Christ: "*He that receiveth whomsoever I send*, though weak and poor, and subject to like passions as others (for as the law, so the gospel, *makes men priests that have infirmity*), yet if he deliver my message, and be regularly called and appointed to do so, and as an officer give himself to the word and prayer, he that entertains him shall be owned as a friend of mine." Christ was now leaving the world, but he would leave an order of men to be his agents, to deliver his word, and those who receive *this*, in the light and love of it, receive *him*. To believe the doctrine of Christ, and obey his law, and accept the salvation offered upon the terms proposed; this is receiving those whom Christ sends, and it is receiving Christ Jesus the Lord himself. 2. We are here encouraged to receive Christ as sent of God: "*He that thus receiveth me*, that receiveth Christ in his ministers, receiveth the Father also, for they come upon his errand likewise, baptizing in the name of the Father, as well as of the Son. Or, in general, *He that receiveth me* as his prince and Saviour receiveth *him that sent me* as his portion and felicity. Christ was sent of God, and in embracing his religion we embrace the *only true religion*."

IV. Christ more particularly notifies to them the plot which one of their number was now hatching against him (v. 21): "*When Jesus had thus said* in general, to prepare them for a more particular discovery, he was troubled in spirit, and showed it by some gesture or sign, and he testified, he solemnly declared it (*cum animo testandi—with the so-*

lemnity of a witness on oath), "*One of you shall betray me; one of you my apostles and constant followers.*" None indeed could be said to *betray* him but those in whom he reposed a confidence, and who were the witnesses of his retirements. This did not determine Judas to the sin by any fatal necessity; for, though the event did follow according to the prediction, yet not from the prediction. Christ is not the author of sin; yet as to this heinous sin of Judas, 1. Christ foresaw it; for even that which is secret and future, and hidden from the eyes of all living, naked and open before the eyes of Christ. He *knows what is in men* better than they do themselves (2 Kings viii. 12), and therefore sees what will be done by them. *I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously*, Isa. xlviii. 8. 2. He foretold it, not only for the sake of the rest of the disciples, but for the sake of Judas himself, that he might take warning, and recover himself out of the snare of the devil. Traitors proceed not in their plots when they find they are discovered; surely Judas, when he finds that his Master knows his design, will retreat in time; if not, it will aggravate his condemnation. 3. He spoke of it with a manifest concern; he was *troubled in spirit* when he mentioned it. He had often spoken of his own sufferings and death, without any such trouble of spirit as he here manifested when he spoke of the ingratitude and treachery of Judas. This touched him in a tender part. Note, The falls and miscarriages of the disciples of Christ are a great trouble of spirit to their Master; the sins of Christians are the grief of Christ. "What! *One of you betray me?*" You that have received from me such distinguishing favours; you that I had reason to think would be firm to me, that have professed such a respect for me; what iniquity have you found in me that one of you should betray me?" This went to his heart, as the undutifulness of children grieves those who have *nourished and brought them up*, Isa. i. 2. See Ps. xcv. 10; Isa. lxiii. 10.

V. The disciples quickly take the alarm. They knew their Master would neither deceive them nor jest with them; and therefore *looked one upon another*, with a manifest concern, *doubting of whom he spoke*. 1. By looking one upon another they evinced the trouble they were in upon this notice given them; it struck such a horror upon them that they knew not well which way to look, nor what to say. They saw their Master troubled, and therefore they were troubled. This was at a feast where they were cheerfully entertained; but hence we must be taught to rejoice with trembling, and as though we rejoiced not. When David wept for his son's rebellion, all his followers wept with him (2 Sam. xv. 30); so Christ's disciples here. Note, That which grieves Christ is, and should be, a grief to all that are his, particularly the scandalous miscarriages of

those that are called by his name: *Who is offended, and I burn not?* 2. Hereby they endeavoured to *discover* the traitor. They looked wistfully in one another's face, to see who blushed, or, by some disorder in the countenance, manifested guilt in the heart, upon this notice; but, while those who were faithful had their consciences so clear that they could *lift up their faces without spot*, he that was false had his conscience so seared that he was not ashamed, neither could he blush, and so no discovery could be made in this way. Christ thus perplexed his disciples for a time, and put them into confusion, that he might *humble them, and prove them*, might excite in them a jealousy of themselves, and an indignation at the baseness of Judas. It is good for us sometimes to be put to a gaze, to be put to a pause.

VI. The disciples were solicitous to get their Master to explain himself, and to tell them particularly whom he meant; for nothing but this can put them out of their present pain, for each of them thought he had as much reason to suspect himself as any of his brethren; now,

1. Of all the disciples John was most fit to ask, because he was the favourite, and sat next his Master (v. 23): *There was leaning on Jesus's bosom one of the disciples whom Jesus loved*. It appears that this was John, by comparing *ch. xxi. 20, 24*. Observe, (1.) The particular kindness which Jesus had for him; he was known by this periphrasis, that he was *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. He loved them all (v. 1), but John was particularly dear to him. His name signifies *gracious*. Daniel, who was honoured with the revelations of the Old Testament, as John of the New, was *a man greatly beloved*, Dan. ix. 23. Note, Among the disciples of Christ some are dearer to him than others. (2.) His place and posture at this time: He was *leaning on Jesus's bosom*. Some say that it was the fashion in those countries to sit at meat in a leaning posture, so that the second lay in the bosom of the first, and so on, which does not seem probable to me, for in such a posture as this they could neither eat nor drink conveniently; but, whether this was the case or not, John now *leaned on Christ's bosom*, and it seems to be an extraordinary expression of endearment used at this time. Note, There are some of Christ's disciples whom he lays in his bosom, who have more free and intimate communion with him than others. The Father loved the Son, and laid him *in his bosom* (*ch. i. 18*), and believers are in like manner one with Christ. *ch. xvii. 21*. This honour all the saints shall have shortly in the bosom of Abraham. Those who lay themselves at Christ's feet, he will lay in his bosom. (3.) Yet he conceals his name, because he himself was the penman of the story. He put this instead of his name, to show that he was pleased with it; it is his title of honour, that he was *the disciple whom*



*Jesus loved*, as in David's and Solomon's court there was one that was the *king's friend*; yet he does not put his name down, to show that he was not proud of it, nor would seem to boast of it. Paul in a like case saith, *I knew a man in Christ*.

2. Of all the disciples Peter was most forward to know, v. 24. Peter, sitting at some distance, beckoned to John, by some sign or other, to ask. Peter was generally the leading man, most apt to put himself forth; and, where men's natural tempers lead them to be thus bold in answering and asking, if kept under the laws of humility and wisdom, they make men very serviceable. God gives his gifts variously; but that the forward men in the church may not think too well of themselves, nor the modest be discouraged, it must be noted that it was not Peter, but John, that was the beloved disciple. Peter was desirous to know, not only that he might be sure it was not he, but that, knowing who it was, they might withdraw from him, and guard against him, and, if possible, prevent his design. It were a desirable thing, we should think, to know who in the church will deceive us; yet let this suffice—Christ knows, though we do not. The reason why Peter did not himself ask was because John had a much fairer opportunity, by the advantage of his seat at table, to whisper the question into the ear of Christ, and to receive a like private answer. It is good to improve our interest in those that are near to Christ, and to engage their prayers for us. Do we know any that we have reason to think lie in Christ's bosom? Let us beg of them to speak a good word for us.

3. The question was asked accordingly (v. 25): *He then, lying at the breast of Jesus*, and so having the convenience of whispering with him, *saith unto him, Lord, who is it?* Now here John shows, (1.) A regard to his fellow-disciple, and to the motion he made. Though Peter had not the honour he had at this time, yet he did not therefore disdain to take the hint and intimation he gave him. Note, Those who lie in Christ's bosom may often learn from those who lie at his feet something that will be profitable for them, and be reminded of that which they did not of themselves think of. John was willing to gratify Peter herein, having so fair an opportunity for it. As every one hath received the gift, so let him minister the same for a common good, Rom. xii. 6. (2.) A reverence of his Master. Though he whispered this in Christ's ear, yet he called him Lord; the familiarity he was admitted to did not at all lessen his respect for his Master. It becomes us to use a reverence in expression, and to observe a decorum even in our secret devotions, which no eye is a witness to, as well as in public assemblies. The more intimate communion gracious souls have with Christ, the more sensible they are of his worthiness and their own unworthiness, as Gen. xviii. 27.

4. Christ gave a speedy answer to this question, but whispered it in John's ear; for it appears (v. 29) that the rest were still ignorant of the matter. *He it is to whom I shall give a sop*, ψωμιον—a morsel, a crust, *when I have dipped it* in the sauce. And *when he had dipped the sop*, John strictly observing his motions, *he gave it to Judas*; and Judas took it readily enough, not suspecting the design of it, but glad of a savoury bit, to make up his mouth with. (1.) Christ notified the traitor by a sign. He could have told John by name who he was (The adversary and enemy is that wicked Judas, he is the traitor, and none but he); but thus he would exercise the observation of John, and intimate what need his ministers have of a spirit of discerning; for the false brethren we are to stand upon our guard against are not made known to us by words, but by signs; they are to be known to us by *their fruits*, by *their spirits*; it requires great diligence and care to form a right judgment upon them. (2.) That sign was a sop which Christ gave him, a very proper sign, because it was the fulfilling of the scripture (v. 18), that the traitor should be one that *ate bread with him*, that was at this time a fellow-commoner with him. It had likewise a significance in it, and teaches us, [1.] That Christ sometimes gives sops to traitors; worldly riches, honours, and pleasures are sops (if I may so speak), which Providence sometimes gives into the hands of wicked men. Judas perhaps thought himself a favourite because he had the sop, like Benjamin at Joseph's table, a mess by himself; thus the prosperity of fools, like a stupefying sop, helps to destroy them. [2.] That we must not be outrageous against those whom we know to be very malicious against us. Christ carved to Judas as kindly as to any at the table, though he knew he was then plotting his death. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him*; this is to do as Christ does.

VII. Judas himself, instead of being convinced hereby of his wickedness, was the more confirmed in it, and the warning given him was to him a *savour of death unto death*; for it follows,

1. The devil hereupon took possession of him (v. 27): *After the sop, Satan entered into him*; not to make him melancholy, nor drive him distracted, which was the effect of his possessing some; not to hurry him into the fire, nor into the water; happy had it been for him if that had been the worst of it, or if with the swine he had been choked in the sea; but Satan entered into him to possess him with a prevailing prejudice against Christ and his doctrine, and a contempt of him, as one whose life was of small value, to excite in him a covetous desire of the wages of unrighteousness and a resolution to stick at nothing for the obtaining of them. But,

(1.) Was not Satan in him before? How then is it said that now *Satan entered into*



him? Judas was all along a devil (*ch. vi. 70*), a son of perdition, but now Satan gained a more full possession of him, had a more abundant entrance into him. His purpose to betray his Master was now ripened into a fixed resolution; now he returned with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, *Luke xi. 26*. Note, [1.] Though the devil is in every wicked man that does his works (*Eph. ii. 2*), yet sometimes he enters more manifestly and more powerfully than at other times, when he puts them upon some enormous wickedness, which humanity and natural conscience startle at. [2.] Betrayers of Christ have much of the devil in them. Christ speaks of the sin of Judas as greater than that of any of his persecutors.

(2.) How came Satan to enter into him after the sop? Perhaps he was presently aware that it was the discovery of him, and it made him desperate in his resolutions. Many are made worse by the gifts of Christ's bounty, and are confirmed in their impenitency by that which should have led them to repentance. The coals of fire heaped upon their heads, instead of melting them, harden them.

2. Christ hereupon dismissed him, and delivered him up to his own heart's lusts: *Then said Jesus unto him, What thou doest, do quickly*. This is not to be understood as either advising him to his wickedness or warranting him in it; but either, (1.) As abandoning him to the conduct and power of Satan. Christ knew that Satan had entered into him, and had peaceable possession; and now he gives him up as hopeless. The various methods Christ had used for his conviction were ineffectual; and therefore, "What thou doest thou wilt do quickly; if thou art resolved to ruin thyself, go on, and take what comes." Note, When the evil spirit is willingly admitted, the good Spirit justly withdraws. Or, (2.) As challenging him to do his worst: "Thou art plotting against me, put thy plot in execution and welcome, the sooner the better, I do not fear thee, I am ready for thee." Note, our Lord Jesus was very forward to suffer and die for us, and was impatient of delay in the perfecting of his undertaking. Christ speaks of Judas's betraying him as a thing he was now doing, though he was only purposing it. Those who are contriving and designing mischief are, in God's account, doing mischief.

3. Those that were at table understood not what he meant, because they did not hear what he whispered to John (*v. 28, 29*): *No man at table*, neither the disciples nor any other of the guests, except John, knew for what intent he spoke this to him. (1.) They did not suspect that Christ said it to Judas as a traitor, because it did not enter into their heads that Judas was such a one, or would prove so. Note, It is an excusable dulness in the disciples of Christ not to be quick-sighted in their censures. Most are

ready enough to say, when they hear harsh things spoken in general, Now such a one is meant, and now such a one; but Christ's disciples were so well taught to love one another that they could not easily learn to suspect one another; *charity thinks no evil*. (2.) They therefore took it for granted that he said it to him as a trustee, or treasurer of the household, giving him orders for the laying out of some money. Their surmises in this case discover to us for what uses and purposes our Lord Jesus commonly directed payments out of that little stock he had, and so teach us how to honour the Lord with our substance. They concluded something was to be laid out, either, [1.] In works of piety: *Buy those things that we have need of against the feast*. Though he borrowed a room to eat the passover in, yet he bought in provision for it. That is to be reckoned well bestowed which is laid out upon those things we have need of for the maintenance of God's ordinances among us; and we have the less reason to grudge that expense now because our gospel-worship is far from being so chargeable as the legal worship was. [2.] Or in works of charity: *That he should give something to the poor*. By this it appears, First, That our Lord Jesus, though he lived upon alms himself (*Luke viii. 3*), yet gave alms to the poor, a little out of a little. Though he might very well be excused, not only because he was poor himself, but because he did so much good in other ways, curing so many *gratis*; yet, to set us an example, he gave, for the relief of the poor, out of that which he had for the subsistence of his family; see *Eph. iv. 28*. Secondly, That the time of a religious feast was thought a proper time for works of charity. When he celebrated the passover he ordered something for the poor. When we experience God's bounty to us, this should make us bountiful to the poor.

4. Judas hereupon sets himself vigorously to pursue his design against him: *He went away*. Notice is taken,

(1.) Of his speedy departure: *He went out presently*, and quitted the house, [1.] For fear of being more plainly discovered to the company, for, if he were, he expected they would all fall upon him, and be the death of him, or at least of his project. [2.] He went out as one weary of Christ's company and the society of his apostles. Christ needed not to expel him, he expelled himself. Note, Withdrawing from the communion of the faithful is commonly the first overt-act of a backslider, and the beginning of an apostasy. [3.] *He went out* to prosecute his design, to look for those with whom he was to make his bargain, and to settle the agreement with them. Now that Satan had got into him he hurried him on with precipitation, lest he should see his error and repent of it.

(2.) Of the time of his departure: *It was*



night. [1.] Though it was night, an unseasonable time for business, yet, Satan having entered into him, he made no difficulty of the coldness and darkness of the night. This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of Christ, that the devil's servants are so earnest and venturous in his service. [2.] Because it was night, and this gave him advantage of privacy and concealment. He was not willing to be seen treating with the chief priests, and therefore chose the dark night as the fittest time for such works of darkness. Those whose deeds are evil love darkness rather than light. See Job xxiv. 13, &c.

31 Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. 34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

This and what follows, to the end of ch. xiv., was Christ's table-talk with his disciples. When supper was done, Judas went out; but what did the Master and his disciples do, whom he left sitting at table? They applied themselves to profitable discourse, to teach us as much as we can to make conversation with our friends at table serviceable to religion. Christ begins this discourse. The more forward we are humbly to promote that communication which is good, and to the use of edifying, the more like we are to Jesus Christ. Those especially that by their place, reputation, and gifts, command the company, to whom men give ear, ought to use the interest they have in other respects as an opportunity of doing them good. Now our Lord Jesus discourses with them (and probably discourses much more largely than is here recorded),

I. Concerning the great mystery of his own death and sufferings, about which they were as yet so much in the dark that they could not persuade themselves to expect the thing itself, much less did they understand the meaning of it; and therefore Christ gives them such instructions concerning it as made the offence of the cross to cease. Christ did not begin this discourse till Judas was gone out, for he was a false brother. The presence of wicked people is often a hindrance to good discourse. When Judas

was gone out, Christ said, Now is the Son of man glorified; now that Judas is discovered and discarded, who was a spot in their love-feast and a scandal to their family, now is the Son of man glorified. Note, Christ is glorified by the purifying of Christian societies: corruptions in his church are a reproach to him; the purging out of those corruptions rolls away the reproach. Or, rather, now Judas was gone to set the wheels a-going, in order to his being put to death, and the thing was likely to be effected shortly: Now is the Son of man glorified, meaning, Now he is crucified.

1. Here is something which Christ instructs them in, concerning his sufferings, that was very comforting.

(1.) That he should himself be glorified in them. Now the Son of man is to be exposed to the greatest ignominy and disgrace, to be despitely used to the last degree, and dishonoured both by the cowardice of his friends and the insolence of his enemies; yet now he is glorified; For, [1.] Now he is to obtain a glorious victory over Satan and all the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and triumph over them. He is now girding on the harness, to take the field against these adversaries of God and man, with as great an assurance as if he had put it off. [2.] Now he is to work out a glorious deliverance for his people, by his death to reconcile them to God, and bring in an everlasting righteousness and happiness for them; to shed that blood which is to be an inexhaustible fountain of joys and blessings to all believers. [3.] Now he is to give a glorious example of self-denial and patience under the cross, courage and contempt of the world, zeal for the glory of God, and love to the souls of men, such as will make him to be for ever admired and had in honour. Christ had been glorified in many miracles he had wrought, and yet he speaks of his being glorified now in his sufferings, as if that were more than all his other glories in his humble state.

(2.) That God the Father should be glorified in them. The sufferings of Christ were, [1.] The satisfaction of God's justice, and so God was glorified in them. Reparation was thereby made with great advantage for the wrong done him in his honour by the sin of man. The ends of the law were abundantly answered, and the glory of his government effectually asserted and maintained. [2.] They were the manifestation of his holiness and mercy. The attributes of God shine brightly in creation and providence, but much more in the work of redemption; see 1 Cor. i. 24; 2 Cor. iv. 6. God is love, and herein he hath commended his love.

(3.) That he should himself be greatly glorified after them, in consideration of God's being greatly glorified by them, v. 32. Observe now he enlarges upon it. [1.] He is sure that God will glorify him; and those

whom God glorifies are glorious indeed. Hell and earth set themselves to vilify Christ, but God resolved to glorify him, and he did it. He glorified him in his sufferings by the amazing signs and wonders, both in heaven and earth, which attended them, and extorted even from his crucifiers an acknowledgment that he was the Son of God. But especially after his sufferings he glorified him, when he set him *at his own right hand*, gave him a *name above every name*. [2.] That he will glorify him in himself—*ἐν ἑαυτῷ*. Either, *First*, In Christ himself. He will glorify him in his own person, and not only in his kingdom among men. This supposes his speedy resurrection. A common person may be honoured after his death, in his memory or posterity, but Christ was honoured in himself. Or, *Secondly*, in God himself. God will glorify him with himself, as it is explained, *ch. xvii. 5. He shall sit down with the Father upon his throne*, Rev. iii. 21. This is true glory. [3.] That he will glorify him straightway. He looked upon the joy and glory set before him, not only as great, but as near; and his sorrows and sufferings short and soon over. Good services done to earthly princes often remain long unrewarded; but Christ had his preferments presently. It was but forty hours (or not so much) from his death to his resurrection, and forty days thence to his ascension, so that it might well be said that he was *straightway glorified*, Ps. xvi. 10. [4.] All this in consideration of God's being glorified in and by his sufferings: *Seeing God is glorified in him*, and receives honour from his sufferings, God shall in like manner glorify him in himself, and give honour to him. Note, *First*, In the exaltation of Christ there was a regard had to his humiliation, and a reward given for it. *Because he humbled himself, therefore God highly exalted him*. If the Father be so great a gainer in his glory by the death of Christ, we may be sure that the Son shall be no loser in his. See the covenant between them, Isa. liii. 12. *Secondly*, Those who mind the business of glorifying God no doubt shall have the happiness of being glorified with him.

2. Here is something that Christ instructs them in, concerning his sufferings, which was *awakening*, for as yet they were slow of heart to understand it (*v. 33*): *Little children, yet a little while I am with you*, &c. Two things Christ here suggests, to quicken his disciples to improve their present opportunities; two serious words:—

(1.) That his stay in this world, to be with them here, they would find to be very short. *Little children*. This compellation does not bespeak so much their weakness as his tenderness and compassion; he speaks to them with the affection of a father, now that he is about to leave them, and to leave blessings with them. Know this, then, that *yet a little while I am with you*. Whether we under-

stand this as referring to his death or his ascension it comes much to one; he had but a little time to spend with them, and therefore, [1.] Let them improve the advantage they now had. If they had any good question to ask, if they would have any advice, instruction, or comfort, let them speak quickly; for *yet a little while I am with you*. We must make the best of the helps we have for our souls while we have them, because we shall not have them long; they will be taken from us, or we from them. [2.] Let them not doat upon his bodily presence, as if their happiness and comfort were bound up in that; no, they must think of living without it; not be always little children, but go alone, without their nurses. Ways and means are appointed but for a *little while*, and are not to be rested in, but pressed through to our rest, to which they have a reference.

(2.) That their following him to the other world, to be with him there, they would find to be very difficult. What he had said to the Jews (*ch. vii. 34*) he saith to his disciples; for they have need to be quickened by the same considerations that are propounded for the convincing and awakening of sinners. Christ tells them here, [1.] That when he was gone they would feel the want of him: *You shall seek me*, that is, "you shall wish you had me again with you." We are often taught the worth of mercies by the want of them. Though the presence of the Comforter yielded them real and effectual relief in straits and difficulties, yet it was not such a *sensible* satisfaction as his bodily presence would have been to those who had been used to it. But observe, Christ said to the Jews, *You shall seek me and not find me*; but to the disciples he only saith, *You shall seek me*, intimating that though they should not find his bodily presence any more than the Jews, yet they should find that which was tantamount, and should not seek in vain. When they sought his body in the sepulchre, though they did not find it, yet they sought to good purpose. [2.] That whither he went they *could not come*, which suggests to them high thoughts of him, who was going to an invisible inaccessible world, to dwell in that *light which none can approach unto*; and also low thoughts of themselves, and serious thoughts of their future state. Christ tells them that they could not follow him (as Joshua told the people that they could not serve the Lord) only to quicken them to so much the more diligence and care. They could not follow him to his cross, for they had not courage and resolution; it appeared that they could not when they all forsook him and fled. Nor could they follow him to his crown, for they had not a sufficiency of their own, nor were their work and warfare yet finished.

II. He discourses with them concerning the great duty of brotherly love (*v. 34, 35*): *You shall love one another*. Judas was now



gone out, and had proved himself a false brother; but they must not therefore harbour such jealousies and suspicions one of another as would be the bane of love: though there was one Judas among them, yet they were not all Judases. Now that the enmity of the Jews against Christ and his followers was swelling to the height, and they must expect such treatment as their Master had, it concerned them by brotherly love to strengthen one another's hands. Three arguments for mutual love are here urged:—

1. The command of their Master (v. 34): *A new commandment I give unto you.* He not only commends it as amiable and pleasant, not only counsels it as excellent and profitable, but commands it, and makes it one of the fundamental laws of his kingdom; it goes a-breast with the command of believing in Christ, 1 John iii. 23; 1 Pet. i. 22. It is the command of our ruler, who has a right to give law to us; it is the command of our Redeemer, who gives us this law in order to the curing of our spiritual diseases and the preparing of us for our eternal bliss. It is *a new commandment*; that is, (1.) It is a renewed commandment; it was a commandment *from the beginning* (1 John ii. 7), as old as the law of nature, it was the second great commandment of the law of Moses; yet, because it is also one of the great commandments of the New Testament, of Christ the new Lawgiver, it is called a new commandment; it is like an old book in a new edition corrected and enlarged. This commandment has been so corrupted by the traditions of the Jewish church that when Christ revived it, and set it in a true light, it might well be called a *new commandment*. Laws of revenge and retaliation were so much in vogue, and self-love had so much the ascendant, that the law of brotherly love was forgotten as obsolete and out of date; so that as it came from Christ new, it was new to the people. (2.) It is an excellent command, as a *new song* is an excellent song, that has an uncommon gratefulness in it. (3.) It is an everlasting command; so strangely new as to be always so; as the *new covenant*, which shall never decay (Heb. viii. 13); it shall be new to eternity, when faith and hope are antiquated. (4.) As Christ gives it, it is *new*. Before it was, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*; now it is, *You shall love one another*; it is pressed in a more winning way when it is thus pressed as mutual duty owing to one another.

2. The example of their Saviour is another argument for brotherly love: *As I have loved you.* It is this that makes it a *new commandment*—that this rule and reason of love (*as I have loved you*) is perfectly new, and such as had been hidden from ages and generations. Understand this, (1.) Of all the instances of Christ's love to his disciples, which they had already experienced during the time he went in and out among them. He spoke kindly

to them, concerned himself heartily for them, and for their welfare, instructed, counselled and comforted them, prayed with them and for them, vindicated them when they were accused, took their part when they were run down, and publicly owned them to be dearer to him than his *mother, or sister, or brother*. He reproved them for what was amiss, and yet compassionately bore with their failings, excused them, made the best of them, and passed by many an oversight. Thus he *had* loved them, and just now washed their feet; and thus they *must* love one another, and love *to the end*. Or, (2.) It may be understood of the special instance of love to all his disciples which he was now about to give, in laying down his life for them. *Greater love hath no man than this*, ch. xv. 13. Has he thus loved us all? Justly may he expect that we should be loving to one another. Not that we are capable of doing any thing of the *same nature* for each other (Ps. xlix. 7), but we must love one another in some respects after the *same manner*; we must set this before us as our copy, and take directions from it. Our love to one another must be free and ready, laborious and expensive, constant and persevering; it must be love to the *souls* one of another. We must also love one another from *this motive*, and upon this consideration—because Christ has loved us. See Rom. xv. 1, 3; Eph. v. 2, 25; Phil. ii. 1—5.

3. The reputation of their profession (v. 35): *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.* Observe, We must have love, not only show love, but have it in the root and habit of it, and have it when there is not any present occasion to show it; have it *ready*. "Hereby it will appear that you are indeed my followers by following me in this." Note, Brotherly love is the badge of Christ's disciples. By this he knows them, by this they may know themselves (1 John iii. 14), and by this others may know them. This is the livery of his family, the distinguishing character of his disciples; this he would have them *noted for*, as that wherein they excelled all others—their loving one another. This was what their Master was famous for; all that ever heard of him have heard of his love, his great love; and therefore, if you see any people more affectionate one to another than what is common, say, "Certainly these are the followers of Christ, they have been with Jesus." Now by this it appears, (1.) That the heart of Christ was very much upon it, that his disciples *should love one another*. In this they must be *singular*; whereas the way of the world is to be *every one for himself*, they should be hearty for one another. He does not say, *By this shall all men know* that you are my disciples—if you *work miracles*, for a worker of miracles is but a cypher without charity (1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2); but *if you love one another from a principle of*



self-denial and gratitude to Christ. This Christ would have to be the *proprium* of his religion, the principal note of the true church. (2.) That it is the true honour of Christ's disciples to excel in brotherly love. Nothing will be more effectual than this to recommend them to the esteem and respect of others. See what a powerful attractive it was, Acts ii. 46, 47. Tertullian speaks of it as the glory of the primitive church that the Christians were known by their affection to one another. Their adversaries took notice of it, and said, *See how these Christians love one another*, Apol. cap. 39. (3.) That, if the followers of Christ do not love one another, they not only cast an unjust reproach upon their profession, but give just cause to suspect their own sincerity. *O Jesus! are these thy Christians*, these passionate, malicious, spiteful, ill-natured people? *Is this thy son's coat?* When our brethren stand in need of help from us, and we have an opportunity of being serviceable to them, when they differ in opinion and practice from us, or are any ways rivals with or provoking to us, and so we have an occasion to condescend and forgive, in such cases as this it will be known whether we have this badge of Christ's disciples.

36 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. 37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. 38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

In these verses we have,

I. Peter's curiosity, and the check given to that.

1. Peter's question was bold and blunt (v. 36): *Lord, whither goest thou?* referring to what Christ had said (v. 33), *Whither I go, you cannot come*. The practical instructions Christ had given them concerning brotherly love he overlooks, and asks no questions upon them, but fastens upon that concerning which Christ purposely kept them in the dark. Note, It is a common fault among us to be more inquisitive concerning things secret, which belong to God only, than concerning things revealed, which belong to us and our children, more desirous to have our curiosity gratified than our consciences directed, to know what is done in heaven than what we may do to get thither. It is easy to observe it in the converse of Christians, how soon a discourse of that which is plain and edifying is dropped, and no more said to it, the subject is exhausted; which in a

matter of doubtful disputation runs into an endless strife of words.

2. Christ's answer was instructive. He did not gratify him with any particular account of the world he was going to, nor ever foretold his glories and joys so distinctly as he did his sufferings, but said what he had said before (v. 36): *Let this suffice, thou canst not follow me now, but shalt follow me hereafter*. (1.) We may understand it of his following him to the cross: "Thou hast not yet strength enough of faith and resolution to drink of my cup;" and it appeared so by his cowardice when Christ was suffering. For this reason, when Christ was seized, he provided for the safety of his disciples: *Let these go their way*, because they could not follow him now. Christ considers the frame of his disciples, and will not cut out for them that work and hardship which they are not as yet fit for; the day shall be as the strength is. Peter, though designed for martyrdom, cannot follow Christ now, not being come to his full growth, but he shall follow him hereafter; he shall be crucified at last, like his Master. Let him not think that because he escapes suffering now he shall never suffer. From our missing the cross once, we must not infer that we shall never meet it; we may be reserved for greater trials than we have yet known. (2.) We may understand it of his following him to the crown. Christ was now going to his glory, and Peter was very desirous to go with him: "No," saith Christ, "*thou canst not follow me now*, thou art not yet ripe for heaven, nor hast thou finished thy work on earth. The forerunner must first enter to prepare a place for thee, but thou shalt follow me afterwards, after thou hast fought the good fight, and at the time appointed." Note, Believers must not expect to be glorified as soon as they are effectually called, for there is a wilderness between the Red Sea and Canaan.

II. Peter's confidence, and the check given to that.

1. Peter makes a daring protestation of his constancy. He is not content to be left behind, but asks, "*Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?*" Dost thou question my sincerity and resolution? I promise thee, if there be occasion, *I will lay down my life for thy sake*." Some think Peter had a conceit, as the Jews had in a like case (ch. vii. 35), that Christ was designing a journey or voyage into some remote country, and that he declared his resolution to go along with him wherever he went; but, having heard his Master so often speak of his own sufferings, surely he could not understand him any otherwise than of his going away by death; and he resolves as Thomas did that he will *go and die with him*; and better die with him than live without him. See here, (1.) What an affectionate love Peter had to our Lord Jesus: "*I will lay down my life for thy sake*, and I can do no more." I believe



Peter spoke as he thought, and though he was inconsiderate he was not insincere, in his resolution. Note, Christ should be dearer to us than our own lives, which therefore, when we are called to it, we should be willing to lay down for his sake, Acts xx. 24. (2.) How ill he took it to have it questioned, intimated in that expostulation, "*Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?*" Dost thou suspect my fidelity to thee?" 1 Sam. xxix. 8. Note, It is with regret that true love hears its own sincerity arraigned, as *ch. xxi. 17*. Christ had indeed said that one of them was a devil, but he was discovered, and gone out, and therefore Peter thinks he may speak with the more assurance of his own sincerity: "*Lord, I am resolved I will never leave thee, and therefore why cannot I follow thee?*" We are apt to think that we can do any thing, and take it amiss to be told that this and the other we cannot do, whereas without Christ we can do nothing.

2. Christ gives him a surprising prediction of his inconstancy, *v. 38*. Jesus Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and has many ways of discovering those to themselves whom he loves, and will hide pride from. (1.) He upbraids Peter with his confidence: *Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?* Methinks, he seems to have said this with a smile: "Peter, thy promises are too large, too lavish to be relied on; thou dost not consider with what reluctance and struggle a life is laid down, and what a hard task it is to die; not so soon done as said." Christ hereby puts Peter upon second thoughts, not that he might retract his resolution, or recede from it, but that he might insert into it that necessary proviso, "*Lord, thy grace enabling me, I will lay down my life for thy sake.*" "*Wilt thou undertake to die for me?* What! thou that tremblest to walk upon the water to me? What! thou that, when sufferings were spoken of, criest out, *Be it far from thee, Lord?* It was an easy thing to leave thy boats and nets to follow me, but not so easy to lay down thy life." His Master himself struggled when it came to this, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Note, It is good for us to shame ourselves out of our presumptuous confidence in ourselves. Shall a bruised reed set up for a pillar, or a sickly child undertake to be a champion? What a fool am I to talk so big. (2.) He plainly foretels his cowardice in the critical hour. To stop the mouth of his boasting, lest Peter should say it again, Yea Master, that I will, Christ solemnly asserts it with, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice*. He does not say as afterwards, *This night*, for it seems to have been two nights before the passover; but, "Shortly thou wilt have denied me thrice within the space of one night; nay, within so short a space as between the first and last crowing of the cock: *the cock shall not crow,*"

shall not have crowed his crowing out, till thou hast again and again denied me, and that for fear of suffering. The crowing of the cock is mentioned, [1.] To intimate that the trial in which he would miscarry thus should be in the night, which was an improbable circumstance, but Christ's foretelling it was an instance of his infallible foresight. [2.] Because the crowing of the cock was to be the occasion of his repentance, which of itself would not have been if Christ had not put this into the prediction. Christ not only foresaw that Judas would betray him though he only in heart designed it, but he foresaw that Peter would deny him though he did not design it, but the contrary. He knows not only the wickedness of sinners, but the weakness of saints. Christ told Peter, *First*, That he would deny him, would renounce and abjure him: "Thou wilt not only not follow me still, but wilt be ashamed to own that ever thou didst follow me." *Secondly*, That he would do this not once only by a hasty slip of the tongue, but after he had paused would repeat it a second and third time; and it proved too true. We commonly give it as a reason why the prophecies of scripture are expressed darkly and figuratively, because, if they did plainly describe the event, the accomplishment would thereby either be defeated or necessitated by a fatality inconsistent with human liberty; and yet this plain and express prophecy of Peter's denying Christ did neither, nor did in the least make Christ accessory to Peter's sin. But we may well imagine what a mortification it was to Peter's confidence of his own courage to be told this, and to be told it in such a manner that he durst not contradict it, else he would have said as Hazael, *What! is thy servant a dog?* This could not but fill him with confusion. Note, The most secure are commonly the least safe; and those most shamefully betray their own weakness that most confidently presume upon their own strength, 1 Cor. x. 12.

#### CHAP. XIV.

This chapter is a continuation of Christ's discourse with his disciples after supper. When he had convicted and discarded Judas, he set himself to comfort the rest, who were full of sorrow upon what he had said of leaving them, and a great many good words and comfortable words he here speaks to them. The discourse is interlocutory; as Peter in the foregoing chapter, so Thomas, and Philip, and Jude, in this interposed their thoughts upon what he said, according to the liberty he was pleased to allow them. Free conferences are as instructive as solemn speeches, and more so. The general scope of this chapter is in the first verse; it is designed to keep trouble from their hearts; now in order to this they must believe; and let them consider, 1. Heaven as their everlasting rest, *ver. 2, 3*. 2. Christ himself as their way, *ver. 4-11*. 3. The great power they shall be clothed with by the prevalence of their prayers, *ver. 12-14*. 4. The coming of another comforter, *ver. 15-17*. 5. The fellowship and communion that should be between him and them after his departure, *ver. 18-24*. 6. The instructions which the Holy Ghost should give them, *ver. 25, 26*. 7. The peace Christ bequeathed to them, *ver. 27*. 8. Christ's own cheerfulness in his departure, *ver. 28-31*. And this which he said to them is designed for the comfort of all his faithful followers.

LET not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I

would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

In these verses we have,

I. A general caution which Christ gives to his disciples against *trouble of heart* (v. 1): *Let not your heart be troubled*. They now began to be troubled, were entering into this temptation. Now here see,

1. How Christ took notice of it. Perhaps it was apparent in their looks; it was said (*ch. xiii. 22*), *They looked one upon another with anxiety and concern*, and Christ looked upon them all, and observed it; at least, it was intelligible to the Lord Jesus, who is acquainted with all our secret undiscovered sorrows, with the wound that bleeds inwardly; he knows not only how we are afflicted, but how we stand affected under our afflictions, and how near they lie to our hearts; he takes cognizance of all the trouble which his people are at any time in danger of being overwhelmed with; *he knows our souls in adversity*. Many things concurred to trouble the disciples now.

(1.) Christ had just told them of the unkindness he should receive from some of them, and this troubled them all. Peter, no doubt, looked very sorrowful upon what Christ said to him, and all the rest were sorry for him and for themselves too, not knowing whose turn it should be to be told next of some ill thing or other they should do. As to this, Christ comforts them; though a godly jealousy over ourselves is of great use to keep us humble and watchful, yet it must not prevail to the disquieting of our spirits and the damping of our holy joy.

(2.) He had just told them of his own departure from them, that he should not only go away, but go away in a cloud of sufferings. They must shortly hear him loaded with reproaches, and these will be *as a sword in their bones*; they must see him barbarously abused and put to death, and this also will be a sword piercing *through their own souls*, for they had loved him, and chosen him, and left all to follow him. When we now look upon Christ pierced, we cannot but *mourn and be in bitterness*, though we see the glorious issue and fruit of it; much more grievous must the sight be to them, who could then look no further. If Christ depart from them, [1.] They will think themselves shamefully disappointed; for they looked that this had been he that should have delivered Israel, and should have set up his kingdom in secular power and glory, and, in expectation of this, had lost all to follow him. Now, if he leave the world in the same circumstances of meanness and poverty in which he had lived, and worse,

they are quite defeated. [2.] They will think themselves sadly deserted and exposed. They knew by experience what little presence of mind they had in difficult emergencies, that they could count upon nothing but being ruined and run down if they part with their Master. Now, in reference to all these, *Let not your hearts be troubled*. Here are three words, upon any of which the emphasis may significantly be laid. *First*, Upon the word *troubled*, *μη ταρασσέσθω*. Be not so troubled as to be put into a hurry and confusion, *like the troubled sea when it cannot rest*. He does not say, "Let not your hearts be sensible of the griefs, or sad because of them," but, "Be not ruffled and discomposed, be not cast down and disquieted," Ps. xlii. 5. *Secondly*, Upon the word *heart*: "Though the nation and city be troubled, though your little family and flock be troubled, yet *let not your heart be troubled*. Keep possession of your own souls when you can keep possession of nothing else. The heart is the main fort; whatever you do, keep trouble from this, keep this with *all diligence*. The spirit must *sustain the infirmity*, therefore, see that this be not wounded. *Thirdly*, Upon the word *your*: "You that are my disciples and followers, my redeemed, chosen, sanctified ones, however others are overwhelmed with the sorrows of this present time, be not you so, for you know better; let the *sinners in Zion* tremble, but let the *sons of Zion be joyful in their king*." Herein Christ's disciples should *do more than others*, should keep their minds quiet, when every thing else is unquiet.

2. The remedy he prescribes against this trouble of mind, which he saw ready to prevail over them; in general, *believe—πιστεύετε*. (1.) Some read it in both parts imperatively, "*Believe in God*, and his perfections and providence, *believe also in me*, and my mediation. Build with confidence upon the great acknowledged principles of natural religion: that there is a God, that he is most holy, wise, powerful, and good; that he is the governor of the world, and has the sovereign disposal of all events; and comfort yourselves likewise with the peculiar doctrines of that holy religion which I have taught you." But, (2.) We read the former as an acknowledgment that they did believe in God, for which he commends them: "But, if you would effectually provide against a stormy day, *believe also in me*." Through Christ we are brought into covenant with God, and become interested in his favour and promise, which otherwise as sinners we must despair of, and the remembrance of God would have been our trouble; but, by believing in Christ as the Mediator between God and man, our belief in God becomes comfortable; and this is the will of God, that *all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father*, by believing in the Son as they believe in the Father. Those that rightly believe in God will believe



in Jesus Christ, whom he has made known to them; and believing in God through Jesus Christ is an excellent means of keeping trouble from the heart. The joy of faith is the best remedy against the griefs of sense; it is a remedy with a promise annexed to it: *the just shall live by faith*; a remedy with a *probatum est* annexed to it. *I had fainted unless I had believed.*

II. Here is a particular direction to act faith upon the promise of eternal life, v. 2, 3. He had directed them to trust to God, and to trust in him; but what must they trust God and Christ for? Trust them for a happiness to come when this body and this world shall be no more, and for a happiness to last as long as the immortal soul and the eternal world shall last. Now this is proposed as a sovereign cordial under all the troubles of this present time, to which there is that in the happiness of heaven which is admirably adapted and accommodated. The saints have encouraged themselves with this in their greatest extremities, *That heaven would make amends for all.* Let us see how this is suggested here.

1. Believe and consider that really there is such a happiness: *In my Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, v. 2.*

1.) See under what notion the happiness of heaven is here represented: as *mansions*, many mansions in Christ's Father's house. [1.] Heaven is a house, not a tent or tabernacle; it is a *house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* [2.] It is a Father's house: *my Father's house*; and his Father is our Father, to whom he was now ascending; so that in right of their elder brother all true believers shall be welcome to that happiness as to their home. It is his house who is King of kings and Lord of lords, dwells in light, and inhabits eternity. [3.] There are *mansions* there; that is, *First*, Distinct dwellings, an apartment for each. Perhaps there is an allusion to the priests' chambers that were about the temple. In heaven there are accommodations for particular saints; though all shall be swallowed up in God, yet our individuality shall not be lost there; every Israelite had his lot in Canaan, and every elder a seat, Rev. iv. 4. *Secondly*, Durable dwellings. *Movai*, from *μνείω*, *maneo*, *abiding places.* The house itself is lasting; our estate in it is not for a term of years, but a perpetuity. Here we are as in an inn; in heaven we shall gain a settlement. The disciples had quitted their houses to attend Christ, who had not where to lay his head, but the mansions in heaven will make them amends. [4.] There are *many mansions*, for there are many sons to be brought to glory, and Christ exactly knows their number, nor will be straitened for room by the coming of more company than he expects. He had told Peter that he should follow him (*ch. xiii. 36*), but let not the rest be discouraged, in

heaven there are mansions for them *all.* *Rehoboth*, Gen. xxvi. 22.

(2.) See what assurance we have of the reality of the happiness itself, and the sincerity of the proposal of it to us: *"If it were not so, I would have told you.* If you had deceived yourselves, when you quitted your livelihoods, and ventured your lives for me, in prospect of a happiness future and unseen, I would soon have undeceived you." The assurance is built, [1.] Upon the veracity of his word. It is implied, "If there were not such a happiness, valuable and attainable, I would not have told you that there was." [2.] Upon the sincerity of his affection to them. As he is true, and would not impose upon them himself, so he is kind, and would not suffer them to be imposed upon. If either there were no such mansions, or none designed for them, who had left all to follow him, he would have given them timely notice of the mistake, that they might have made an honourable retreat to the world again, and have made the best they could of it. Note, Christ's good-will to us is a great encouragement to our hope in him. He loves us too well, and means us too well, to disappoint the expectations of his own raising, or to leave those to be of all men most miserable who have been of him most observant.

2. Believe and consider that the design of Christ's going away was to prepare a place in heaven for his disciples. "You are grieved to think of my going away, whereas I go on your errand, as the *forerunner*; I am to enter for you." He went to prepare a place for us; that is, (1.) To take possession for us, as our advocate or attorney, and so to secure our title as indefeasible. Livery of seisin was given to Christ, for the use and behoof of all that should believe on him. (2.) To make provision for us as our friend and father. The happiness of heaven, though prepared *before the foundation of the world*, yet must be further fitted up for man in his fallen state. It consisting much in the presence of Christ there, it was therefore necessary that he should *go before*, to enter into that glory which his disciples were to share in. Heaven would be an *unready* place for a Christian if Christ were not there. He went to prepare a table for them, to prepare thrones for them, Luke xxii. 30. Thus Christ declares the fitness of heaven's happiness for the saints, for whom it is prepared.

3. Believe and consider that *therefore* he would certainly come again in due time, to fetch them to that blessed place which he was now going to possess for himself and prepare for them (v. 3): *"If I go and prepare a place for you, if this be the errand of my journey, you may be sure, when every thing is ready, I will come again, and receive you to myself, so that you shall follow me hereafter, that where I am there you may be also."* Now these are comfortable words indeed. (1.) That Jesus Christ will come again; *ἐρχομαι*

—*I do come*, intimating the certainty of it, that he will come and that he is daily coming. We say, *We are coming*, when we are busy in preparing for our coming, and so he is; all he does has a reference and tendency to his second coming. Note, The belief of Christ's second coming, of which he has given us the assurance, is an excellent preservative against trouble of heart, Phil. iv. 5; James v. 8. (2.) That he will come again to receive all his faithful followers to himself. He sends for them privately at death, and gathers them one by one; but they are to make their public entry in solemn state all together at the last day, and then Christ himself will come to receive them, to conduct them in the abundance of his grace, and to welcome them in the abundance of his love. He will hereby testify the utmost respect and endearment imaginable. The coming of Christ is in order to our *gathering together unto him*, 2 Thess. ii. 1. (3.) *That where he is there they shall be also*. 'This intimates, what many other scriptures declare, that the quintessence of heaven's happiness is being with Christ *there*, ch. xvii. 24; Phil. i. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 17. Christ speaks of his being there as now present, *that where I am*; where I am to be shortly, where I am to be eternally; there you shall be shortly, there you shall be eternally: not only *there*, in the same place; but *there*, in the same state: not only spectators of his glory, as the three disciples on the mount, but sharers in it. (4.) That this may be inferred from his *going to prepare a place* for us, for his preparations shall not be in vain. He will not build and furnish lodgings, and let them stand empty. He will be the finisher of that of which he is the author. If he has prepared the place for us, he will prepare us for it, and in due time put us in possession of it. As the resurrection of Christ is the assurance of our resurrection, so his ascension, victory, and glory, are an assurance of ours.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Show us the

Father? 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

Christ, having set the happiness of heaven before them as the end, here shows them himself as the way to it, and tells them that they were better acquainted both with the end they were to aim at and with the way they were to walk in than they thought they were: *You know*, that is, 1. "You may know; it is none of the *secret things* which belong not to you, but one of the *things revealed*; you need not ascend into heaven, nor go down into the deep, for the word is *nigh you* (Rom. x. 6—8), level to you." 2. "You do know; you know that which is the home and which is the way, though perhaps not as the home and as the way. You have been told it, and cannot but know, if you would recollect and consider it." Note, Jesus Christ is willing to make the best of his people's knowledge, though they are weak and defective in it. He knows the good that is in them better than they do themselves, and is certain that they have that knowledge, and faith, and love, of which they themselves are not sensible, or not certain.

This word of Christ gave occasion to two of his disciples to address themselves to him, and he answers them both.

1. Thomas enquired concerning the way (v. 5), without any apology for contradicting his Master.

1. He said, "*Lord, we know not whither thou goest*, to what place or what state, and *how can we know the way* in which we must follow thee? We can neither guess at it, nor enquire it out, but must still be at a loss." Christ's testimony concerning their knowledge made them more sensible of their ignorance, and more inquisitive after further light. Thomas here shows more modesty than Peter, who thought he could follow Christ now. Peter was the more solicitous to know *whither Christ went*. Thomas here, though he complains that he did not know this, yet seems more solicitous to know *the way*. Now, (1.) His confession of his ignorance was commendable enough. If good men be in the dark, and know but in part, yet they are willing to own their defects. But, (2.) The cause of his ignorance was culpable. They knew not whither Christ went, because they dreamed of a temporal kingdom in external pomp and power, and doted upon this, notwithstanding what he had said again and again to the contrary. Hence it was that, when Christ spoke of going away and their following him, their fancy ran upon his going



to some remarkable city or other, Bethlehem, or Nazareth, or Capernaum, or some of the cities of the Gentiles, as David to Hebron, there to be anointed king, and to restore the kingdom to Israel; and which way this place lay, where these castles in the air were to be built, east, west, north, or south, they could not tell, and therefore knew not the way. Thus still we think ourselves more in the dark than we need be concerning the future state of the church, because we expect its worldly prosperity, whereas it is spiritual advancement that the promise points at. Had Thomas understood, as he might have done, that Christ was going to the invisible world, the world of spirits, to which spiritual things only have a reference, he would not have said, *Lord, we do not know the way.*

II. Now to this complaint of their ignorance, which included a desire to be taught, Christ gives a full answer, *v. 6, 7.* Thomas had enquired both whither he went and what was the way, and Christ answers both these enquiries and makes good what he had said, that they would have needed no answer if they had understood themselves aright; for they knew him, and he was the way; they knew the Father, and he was the end; and therefore, *whither I go you know, and the way you know.* Believe in God as the end, and in me as the way (*v. 1*), and you do all you should do.

(1.) He speaks of himself as the way, *v. 6.* Dost thou not know the way? *I am the way, and I only, for no man comes to the Father but by me.* Great things Christ here saith of himself, showing us,

[1.] The nature of his mediation: He is the way, the truth, and the life.

First, Let us consider these first distinctly.

1. Christ is the way, the highway spoken of, Isa. xxxv. 8. Christ was his own way, for by his own blood he entered into the holy place (*Heb. ix. 12*), and he is our way, for we enter by him. By his doctrine and example he teaches us our duty, by his merit and intercession he procures us our happiness, and so he is the way. In him God and man meet, and are brought together. We could not get to the tree of life in the way of innocence; but Christ is another way to it. By Christ, as the way, an intercourse is settled and kept up between heaven and earth; the angels of God ascend and descend; our prayers go to God, and his blessings come to us by him; this is the way that leads to rest, the good old way. The disciples followed him, and Christ tells them that they followed the road, and, while they continued following him, they would never be out of their way. 2. He is the truth. (1.) As truth is opposed to figure and shadow. Christ is the substance of all the Old-Testament types, which are therefore said to be figures of the true, *Heb. ix. 24.* Christ is the true manna (*ch. vi. 32*), the true tabernacle, *Heb. viii. 2.* (2.) As truth is opposed to falsehood and error; the doctrine of

Christ is true doctrine. When we enquire for truth, we need learn no more than the truth as it is in Jesus. (3.) As truth is opposed to fallacy and deceit; he is true to all that trust in him, as true as truth itself, *2 Cor. i. 20.* 3. He is the life; for we are alive unto God only in and through Jesus Christ, *Rom. vi. 11.* Christ formed in us is that to our souls which our souls are to our bodies. Christ is the resurrection and the life.

Secondly, Let us consider these jointly, and with reference to each other. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; that is, 1. He is the beginning, the middle, and the end. In him we must set out, go on, and finish. As the truth, he is the guide of our way; as the life, he is the end of it. 2. He is the true and living way (*Heb. x. 20*); there are truth and life in the way, as well as at the end of it. 3. He is the true way to life, the only true way; other ways may seem right, but the end of them is the way of death.

[2.] The necessity of his mediation: No man cometh to the Father but by me. Fallen man must come to God as a Judge, but cannot come to him as a Father, otherwise than by Christ as Mediator. We cannot perform the duty of coming to God, by repentance and the acts of worship, without the Spirit and grace of Christ, nor obtain the happiness of coming to God as our Father without his merit and righteousness; he is the high priest of our profession, our advocate.

(2.) He speaks of his Father as the end (*v. 7*): "If you had known me aright, you would have known my Father also; and henceforth, by the glory you have seen in me and the doctrine you have heard from me, you know him and have seen him." Here is, [1.] A tacit rebuke to them for their dulness and carelessness in not acquainting themselves with Jesus Christ, though they had been his constant followers and associates: *If you had known me—* They knew him, and yet did not know him so well as they might and should have known him. They knew him to be the Christ, but did not follow on to know God in him. Christ had said to the Jews (*ch. viii. 19*): *If you had known me, you would have known my Father also;* and here the same to his disciples; for it is hard to say which is more strange, the wilful ignorance of those that are enemies to the light, or the defects and mistakes of the children of light, that have had such opportunities of knowledge. If they had known Christ aright, they would have known that his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world; that he came down from heaven, and therefore must return to heaven; and then they would have known his Father also, would have known whither he designed to go, when he said, *I go to the Father,* to a glory in the other world, not in this. If we knew Christianity better, we should better know natural religion. [2.] A favourable intimation that he was well satis-

fied concerning their sincerity, notwithstanding the weakness of their understanding: "And henceforth, from my giving you this hint, which will serve as a key to all the instructions I have given you hitherto, let me tell you, *you know him, and have seen him*, inasmuch as you know me, and have seen me; for in the face of Christ we see the glory of God, as we see a father in his son that resembles him. Christ tells his disciples that they were not so ignorant as they seemed to be; for, though *little children*, yet they had known the Father, 1 John ii. 13. Note, Many of the disciples of Christ have more knowledge and more grace than they think they have, and Christ takes notice of, and is well pleased with, that good in them which they themselves are not aware of; for those that know God do not all at once know that they know him, 1 John ii. 3.

II. Philip enquired concerning the Father (v. 8), and Christ answered him, v. 9—11, where observe,

1. Philip's request for some extraordinary discovery of the Father. He was not so forward to speak as some others of them were, and yet, from an earnest desire of further light, he cries out, *Show us the Father*. Philip listened to what Christ said to Thomas, and fastened upon the last words, *You have seen him*. "Nay," says Philip, "that is what we want, that is what we would have: *Show us the Father and it sufficeth us*." (1.) This supposes an earnest desire of acquaintance with God as a Father. The petition is, "*Show us the Father*; give us to know him in that relation to us;" and this he begs, not for himself only, but for the rest of the disciples. The plea is, *It sufficeth us*. He not only professes it himself, but will pass his word for his fellow-disciples. Grant us but one sight of the Father, and we have enough. Jansenius saith, "Though Philip did not mean it, yet the Holy Ghost, by his mouth, designed here to teach us that the satisfaction and happiness of a soul consist in the vision and fruition of God," Ps. xvi. 11; xvii. 15. In the knowledge of God the understanding rests, and is at the summit of its ambition; in the knowledge of God as our Father the soul is satisfied; a sight of the Father is a heaven upon earth, fills us *with joy unspeakable*. (2.) As Philip speaks it here, it intimates that he was not satisfied with such a discovery of the Father as Christ thought fit to give them, but he would prescribe to him, and press upon him, something further and no less than some visible appearance of *the glory of God*, like that to Moses (Exod. xxxiii. 22), and to the elders of Israel, Exod. xxiv. 9—11. "Let us see the Father with our bodily eyes, as we see thee, *and it sufficeth us*; we will trouble thee with no more questions, *Whither goest thou?*" And so it manifests not only the weakness of his faith, but his ignorance of the gospel way of manifesting *the Father*, which is

spiritual, and not sensible. Such a sight of God, he thinks, would *suffice* them, and yet those who did thus see him were not *sufficed*, but soon *corrupted themselves, and made a graven image*. Christ's institutions have provided better for the confirmation of our faith than our own inventions would.

2. Christ's reply, referring him to the discoveries already made of the Father, v. 9—11.

(1.) He refers him to what he had seen, v. 9. He upbraids him with his ignorance and inadvertency: "*Have I been so long time with you*, now above three years intimately conversant with you, *and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?*" Now, *he that hath seen me hath seen the Father*; and *how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?* Wilt thou ask for that which thou hast already?" Now here,

[1.] He reproves him for two things *First*. For not improving his acquaintance with Christ, as he might have done, to a clear and distinct knowledge of him: "*Hast thou not known me, Philip*, whom thou hast followed so long, and conversed with so much?" Philip, the first day he came to him, declared that he knew him to be the Messiah (ch. i. 45), and yet to this day did *not know the Father* in him. Many that have good knowledge in the scripture and divine things fall short of the attainments justly expected from them, for want of compounding the ideas they have, and going on to perfection. Many know Christ, who yet do not know what they might know of him, nor see what they should see in him. That which aggravated Philip's dulness was that he had so long an opportunity of improvement: *I have been so long time with thee*. Note, The longer we enjoy the means of knowledge and grace, the more inexcusable we are if we be found defective in grace and knowledge. Christ expects that our proficiency should be in some measure according to our standing, that we should not be always babes. Let us thus reason with ourselves: "Have I been so long a hearer of sermons, a student in the scripture, a scholar in the school of Christ, and yet so weak in *the knowledge of Christ*, and so unskillful in *the word of righteousness?*" *Secondly*, He reproves him for his infirmity in the prayer made, *Show us the Father*. Note, Herein appears much of the weakness of Christ's disciples that they *know not what to pray for as they ought* (Rom. viii. 26), but often *ask amiss* (Jam. iv. 3), for that which either is not promised or is already bestowed in the sense of the promise, as here.

[2.] He instructs him, and gives him a maxim which not only in general magnifies Christ and leads us to the knowledge of God in him, but justifies what Christ had said (v. 7): *You know the Father, and have seen him*; and answered what Philip had asked, *Show us the Father*. Why, saith Christ, the difficulty is soon over, for *he that hath seen me hath seen the Father*. *First*, All that saw



Christ in the flesh might have seen the Father in him, if Satan had not blinded their minds, and kept them from a sight of Christ, as the image of God, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Secondly, All that saw Christ by faith did see the Father in him, though they were not suddenly aware that they did so. In the light of Christ's doctrine they saw God as the Father of lights; in the miracles they saw God as the God of power, the finger of God. The holiness of God shone in the spotless purity of Christ's life, and his grace in all the acts of grace he did.

(2.) He refers him to what he had reason to believe (v. 10, 11): "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and therefore that in seeing me thou hast seen the Father? Hast thou not believed this? If not, take my word for it, and believe it now.*"

[1.] See here what it is which we are to believe: *That I am in the Father, and the Father in me*; that is, as he had said (ch. x. 30), *I and my Father are one*. He speaks of the Father and himself as two persons, and yet so one as never any two were or can be. In knowing Christ as *God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, and as being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made*, we know the Father; and in seeing him thus we see the Father. In Christ we behold more of the glory of God than Moses did at Mount Horeb.

[2.] See here what inducements we have to believe this; and they are two:—We must believe it, *First*, For his word's sake: *The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself*. See ch. vii. 16, *My doctrine is not mine*. What he said seemed to them careless as the word of man, speaking his own thoughts at his own pleasure; but really it was the wisdom of God that indited it and the will of God that enforced it. *He spoke not of himself only, but the mind of God according to the eternal counsels*. Secondly, For his works' sake: *The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth them*; and therefore *believe me for their sake*. Observe, 1. The Father is said to dwell in him, *ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων*—*he abideth in me*, by the inseparable union of the divine and human nature: never had God such a temple to dwell in on earth as the body of the Lord Jesus, ch. ii. 21. Here was the true Shechinah, of which that in the tabernacle was but a type. *The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily*, Col. ii. 9. The Father so dwells in Christ that in him he may be found, as a man where he dwells. *Seek ye the Lord, seek him in Christ, and he will be found, for in him he dwells*. 2. *He doeth the works*. Many works of power, and works of mercy, Christ did, and the Father did them in him; and the work of redemption in general was God's own work. 3. We are bound to believe this, *for the very works' sake*. As we are to believe the being and perfections of God for the sake of the works of

creation, which declare his glory; so we are to believe the revelation of God to man in Jesus Christ for the sake of the works of the Redeemer, those mighty works which, by showing forth themselves (Matt. xiv. 2), *Show forth him, and God in him*. Note, Christ's miracles are proofs of his divine mission, not only for the conviction of infidels, but for the confirmation of the faith of his own disciples, ch. ii. 11; v. 36; x. 37.

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

The disciples, as they were full of grief to think of parting with their Master, so they were full of care what would become of themselves when he was gone; while he was with them, he was a support to them, kept them in countenance, kept them in heart; but, if he leave them, they will be as *sheep having no shepherd*, an easy prey to those who seek to run them down. Now, to silence these fears, Christ here assures them that they should be clothed with powers sufficient to bear them out. As Christ had *all power* they, in his name, should have *great power both in heaven and in earth*.

I. Great power on earth (v. 12): *He that believeth on me* (as I know you do), *the works that I do shall he do also*. This does not weaken the argument Christ had taken from his works, to prove himself one with the Father (that others should do as *great works*), but rather strengthens it; for the miracles which the apostles wrought were wrought in his name, and by faith in him; and this magnifies his power more than any thing, that he not only wrought miracles himself, but gave power to others to do so too.

1. Two things he assures them of:—

(1.) That they should be enabled to do such works as he had done, and that they should have a more ample power for the doing of them than they had had when he first sent them forth, Matt. x. 8. Did Christ *heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead*? So should they. Did he convince and convert sinners, and draw multitudes to him? So should they. Though he should depart, the work should not cease, nor fall to the ground, but should be carried on as vigorously and successfully as ever; and it is still in the doing.

(2.) That they should do *greater works than these*. [1.] In the kingdom of nature they should work greater miracles. No miracle is little, but some to our apprehension seem greater than others. Christ had healed with the hem of his garment, but Peter with his



shadow (Acts v. 15), Paul by the handkerchief that had touched him, Acts xix 12. Christ wrought miracles for two or three years in one country, but his followers wrought miracles in his name for many ages in divers countries. *You shall do greater works*, if there be occasion, for the glory of God. *The prayer of faith*, if at any time it had been necessary, would have removed mountains. [2.] In the kingdom of grace. They should obtain greater victories by the gospel than had been obtained while Christ was upon earth. The truth is, the captivating of so great a part of the world to Christ, under such outward disadvantages, was the miracle of all. I think this refers especially to the gift of tongues; this was the immediate effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, which was a constant miracle upon the mind, in which words are framed, and which was made to serve so glorious an intention as that of spreading the gospel to all nations in their own language. This was a greater sign to them that believed not (1 Cor. xiv. 22), and more powerful for their conviction, than any other miracle whatever.

2. The reason Christ gives for this is, *Because I go unto my Father*. (1.) "*Because I go*, it will be requisite that you should have such a power, lest the work suffer damage by my absence." (2.) "*Because I go to the Father*, I shall be in a capacity to furnish you with such a power, for *I go to the Father*, to send the Comforter, from whom you shall receive power," Acts i. 8. The wonderful works which they did in Christ's name were part of the glories of his exalted state, when he ascended on high, Eph. iv. 8.

II. Great power in heaven: "*Whatsoever you shall ask, that will I do* (v. 13, 14), as Israel, who was a prince with God. Therefore you shall do such mighty works, because you have such an interest in me, and I in my Father." Observe,

1. In what way they were to keep up communion with him, and derive power from him, when he was gone to the Father—by prayer. When dear friends are to be removed to a distance from each other, they provide for the settling of a correspondence; thus, when Christ was going to his Father, he tells his disciples how they might write to him upon every occasion, and send their epistles by a safe and ready way of conveyance, without danger of miscarrying, or lying by the way: "Let me hear from you by prayer, the prayer of faith, and you shall hear from me by the Spirit." This was the old way of intercourse with Heaven, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord; but Christ by his death has laid it more open, and it is still open to us. Here is, (1.) Humility prescribed: *You shall ask*. Though they had quitted all for Christ, they could demand nothing of him as a debt, but must be humble supplicants, beg or starve, beg or perish. (2.) Liberty allowed: "Ask any thing, any

thing that is good and proper for you; any thing, provided you know what you ask, you may ask; you may ask for assistance in your work, for a mouth and wisdom, for preservation out of the hands of your enemies, for power to work miracles when there is occasion, for the success of the ministry in the conversion of souls; ask to be informed, directed, vindicated." Occasions vary, but they shall be welcome to the throne of grace upon every occasion.

2. In what name they were to present their petitions: *Ask in my name*. To ask in Christ's name is, (1.) To plead his merit and intercession, and to depend upon that plea. The Old-Testament saints had an eye to this when they prayed for the Lord's sake (Dan. ix. 17), and for the sake of the anointed (Ps lxxxiv. 9), but Christ's mediation is brought to a clearer light by the gospel, and so we are enabled more expressly to ask in his name. When Christ dictated the Lord's prayer, this was not inserted, because they did not then so fully understand this matter as they did afterwards, when the Spirit was poured out. If we ask in our own name, we cannot expect to speed, for, being strangers, we have no name in heaven; being sinners, we have an ill name there; but Christ's is a good name, well known in heaven, and very precious. (2.) It is to aim at his glory and to seek this as our highest end in all our prayers.

3. What success they should have in their prayers: "What you ask, that will I do, v. 13 And again (v. 14), "*I will do it*. You may be sure I will: not only it shall be done, I will see it done, or give orders for the doing of it, but *I will do it*;" for he has not only the interest of an intercessor, but the power of a sovereign prince, who sits at the right hand of God, the hand of action, and has the doing of all in the kingdom of God. By faith in his name we may have what we will for the asking.

4. For what reason their prayers should speed so well: *That the Father may be glorified in the Son*. That is, (1.) This they ought to aim at, and have their eye upon, in asking. In this all our desires and prayers should meet as in their centre; to this they must all be directed, that God in Christ may be honoured by our services, and in our salvation. *Hallowed be thy name* is an answered prayer, and is put first, because, if the heart be sincere in this, it does in a manner consecrate all the other petitions. (2.) This Christ will aim at in granting, and for the sake of this will do what they ask, that hereby the glory of the Father in the Son may be manifested. The wisdom, power, and goodness of God were magnified in the Redeemer when by a power derived from him, and exerted in his name and for his service, his apostles and ministers were enabled to do such great things, both in the proofs of their doctrine and in the successes of it.



15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Christ not only proposes such things to them as were the matter of their comfort, but here promises to send the Spirit, whose office it should be to be their Comforter, to impress these things upon them.

I. He premises to this a memento of duty (v. 15): *If you love me, keep my commandments.* Keeping the commandments of Christ is here put for the practice of godliness in general, and for the faithful and diligent discharge of their office as apostles in particular. Now observe, 1. When Christ is comforting them, he bids them *keep his commandments*; for we must not expect comfort but in the way of duty. The same word (*παρακαλῶ*) signifies both to exhort and to comfort. 2. When they were in care what they should do, now that their Master was leaving them, and what would become of them now, he bids them *keep his commandments*, and then nothing could come amiss to them. In difficult times our care concerning the events of the day should be swallowed up in a care concerning the duty of the day. 3. When they were showing their love to Christ by their grieving to think of his departure, and the sorrow which filled their hearts upon the foresight of that, he bids them, if they would show their love to him, do it, not by these weak and feminine passions, but by their conscientious care to perform their trust, and by a universal obedience to his commands; this is better than sacrifice, better than tears. *Lovest thou me? Feed my lambs.* 4. When Christ has given them precious promises, of the answer of their prayers and the coming of the Comforter, he lays down this as a limitation of the promises, "Provided you keep my commandments, from a principle of love to me." Christ will not be an advocate for any but those that will be ruled and advised by him as their counsel. Follow the conduct of the Spirit, and you shall have the comfort of the Spirit.

II. He promises this great and unspeakable blessing to them, v. 16, 17.

1. It is promised that they shall have *another comforter*. This is the great New-Testament promise (Acts i. 4), as that of the Messiah was of the Old Testament; a promise adapted to the present distress of the disciples, who were in sorrow, and needed a comforter. Observe here,

(1.) The blessing promised *ἄλλον παρά-*  
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*κληρον.* The word is used only here in these discourses of Christ's, and 1 John ii. 1, where we translate it an *advocate*. The Rhemists, and Dr. Hammond, are for retaining the *Greek word Paraclete*; we read, Acts ix. 31, of the *παρακλήσις τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος*, the *comfort of the Holy Ghost*, including his whole office as a paraclete. [1.] You shall have another *advocate*. The office of the Spirit was to be Christ's advocate with them and others, to plead his cause, and take care of his concerns, on earth; to be *vicarius Christi*—Christ's Vicar, as one of the ancients call him; and to be their advocate with their opposers. When Christ was with them he spoke for them as there was occasion; but now that he is leaving them they shall not be run down, the Spirit of the Father shall speak in them, Matt. x. 19, 20. And the cause cannot miscarry that is pleaded by such an advocate. [2.] You shall have another *master or teacher*, another *exhorter*. While they had Christ with them he excited and exhorted them to their duty; but now that he is going he leaves one with them that shall do this as effectually, though silently. Jansenius thinks the most proper word to render it by is a *patron*, one that shall both instruct and protect you. [3.] Another *comforter*. Christ was expected as the consolation of Israel. One of the names of the Messiah among the Jews was *Menahem*—the Comforter. The Targum calls the day of the Messiah *the years of consolation*. Christ comforted his disciples when he was with them, and now that he was leaving them in their greatest need he promises them *another*.

(2.) The giver of this blessing: *The Father* shall give him, *my Father* and *your Father*; it includes both. The same that gave the Son to be our Saviour will give his Spirit to be our comforter, pursuant to the same design. The Son is said to send the Comforter (ch. xv. 26), but the Father is the prime agent.

(3.) How this blessing is procured—by the intercession of the Lord Jesus: *I will pray the Father*. He said (v. 14) *I will do it*; here he saith, *I will pray for it*, to show not only that he is both God and man, but that he is both king and priest. As priest he is ordained for men to make intercession, as king he is authorized by the Father to execute judgment. When Christ saith, *I will pray the Father*, it does not suppose that the Father is unwilling, or must be importuned to it, but only that the gift of the Spirit is a fruit of Christ's mediation, purchased by his merit, and taken out by his intercession.

(4.) The continuance of this blessing. *That he may abide with you for ever*. That is, [1.] "With you, as long as you live. You shall never know the want of a comforter, nor lament his departure, as you are now lamenting mine." Note, It should support us under the loss of those comforts which were designed us for a time that there are ever-

fasting consolations provided for us. It was not expedient that Christ should be with them for ever, for they who were designed for public service, must not always live a college-life; they must disperse, and therefore a comforter that would be with them all, in all places alike, wheresoever dispersed and howsoever distressed, was alone fit to be with them for ever. [2.] "With your successors, when you are gone, to the end of time; your successors in Christianity, in the ministry." [3.] If we take *for ever* in its utmost extent, the promise will be accomplished in those consolations of God which will be the eternal joy of all the saints, *pleasures for ever*.

2. This comforter is the *Spirit of truth*, whom you know, v. 16, 17. They might think it impossible to have a comforter equivalent to him who is the Son of God: "Yea," saith Christ, "you shall have the Spirit of God, who is equal in power and glory with the Son."

(1.) The comforter promised is *the Spirit*, one who should do his work in a spiritual way and manner, inwardly and invisibly, by working on men's spirits.

(2.) "He is the *Spirit of truth*. He will be true to you, and to his undertaking for you, which he will perform to the utmost. He will *teach you the truth*, will enlighten your minds with the knowledge of it, will strengthen and confirm your belief of it, and will increase your love to it. The Gentiles by their idolatries, and the Jews by their traditions, were led into gross errors and mistakes; but the Spirit of truth shall not only *lead you into all truth*, but others by your ministry. Christ is the truth, and he is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit that he was anointed with.

(3.) He is one whom the world cannot receive; but you know him. Therefore he abideth with you. [1.] The disciples of Christ are here distinguished from the world, for they are chosen and called out of the world that lies in wickedness; they are the children and heirs of another world, not of this. [2.] It is the misery of those that are invincibly devoted to the world that they cannot receive the Spirit of truth. The spirit of the world and of God are spoken of as directly contrary the one to the other (1 Cor. ii. 12); for where the spirit of the world has the ascendant, the Spirit of God is excluded. Even the *princes of this world*, though, as princes, they had advantages of knowledge, yet, as princes of this world, they laboured under invincible prejudices, so that they knew not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 8. [3.] Therefore men cannot receive the Spirit of truth because they see him not, neither know him. The comforts of the Spirit are foolishness to them, as much as ever the cross of Christ was, and the great things of the gospel, like those of the law, are counted as a strange thing. These are judgments far above out of their sight. Speak to the children of this world of the operations of the Spirit, and you are as

a barbarian to them [4.] The best knowledge of the Spirit of truth is that which is got by experience: *You know him, for he dwelleth with you*. Christ had dwelt with them, and by their acquaintance with him they could not but know the Spirit of truth. They had themselves been endued with the Spirit in some measure. What enabled them to leave all to follow Christ, and to continue with him in his temptations? What enabled them to preach the gospel, and work miracles, but the Spirit dwelling in them? The experiences of the saints are the explications of the promises; paradoxes to others are axioms to them. [5.] Those that have an experimental acquaintance with the Spirit have a comfortable assurance of his continuance. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, for the blessed Spirit doth not use to shift his lodging. Those that know him know how to value him, invite him and bid him welcome; and therefore he shall be in them, as the light in the air, as the sap in the tree, as the soul in the body. Their communion with him shall be intimate, and their union with him inseparable. [6.] The gift of the Holy Ghost is a peculiar gift, bestowed upon the disciples of Christ in a distinguishing way—they, and not the world; it is to them *hidden manna*, and the *white stone*. No comforts comparable to those which make no show, make no noise. This is the favour God bears to his chosen; it is the heritage of those that fear his name.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. 20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. 21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. 22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? 23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

When friends are parting, it is a common request they make to each other, "Pray let us hear from you as often as you can:" this



Christ engaged to his disciples, that out of sight they should not be out of mind.

I. He promises that he would continue his care of them (v. 18): "*I will not leave you orphans, or fatherless*; for, though I leave you, yet I leave you this comfort, *I will come to you*." His departure from them was that which grieved them; but it was not so bad as they apprehended, for it was neither total nor final. 1. Not total. "Though I leave you without my bodily presence, yet I do not leave you without comfort." Though children, and left little, yet they had received the adoption of sons, and his Father would be their Father, with whom those who otherwise would be fatherless find mercy. Note, The case of true believers, though sometimes it may be sorrowful, is never comfortless, because they are never orphans: for God is their Father, who is an *everlasting Father*. 2. Not final: *I will come to you, ἐρχομαι—I do come*; that is, (1.) "I will come speedily to you at my resurrection, I will not be long away, but will be with you again in a little time." He had often said, *The third day I will rise again*. (2.) "I will be coming daily to you in my Spirit;" in the tokens of his love, and visits of his grace, he is still coming. (3.) "I will come certainly at the end of time; surely I will come quickly to introduce you into the joy of your Lord." Note, The consideration of Christ's coming to us saves us from being comfortless in his removals from us; for, if he *depart for a season*, it is that *we may receive him for ever*. Let this moderate our grief, *The Lord is at hand*.

II. He promises that they should continue their acquaintance with him and interest in him (v. 19, 20): *Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more*, that is, Now I am no more in the world. After his death, *the world saw him no more*, for, though he rose to life, he never *showed himself to all the people*, Acts x. 41. The malignant world thought they had seen enough of him, and *cried, Away with him; crucify him*; and so shall their doom be; they shall see him no more. Those only that see Christ with an eye of faith shall see him for ever. The world sees him no more till his second coming; but his disciples have communion with him in his absence.

1. *You see me*, and shall continue to see me, when *the world sees me no more*. They saw him with their bodily eyes after his resurrection, for he showed himself to them *by many infallible proofs*, Acts i. 8. And then *were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord*. They saw him with an eye of faith after his ascension, sitting at God's right hand, as Lord of all; saw that in him which the world saw not.

2. *Because I live, you shall live also*. That which grieved them was, that their Master was dying, and they counted upon nothing else but to die with him. No, saith Christ, (1.) *I live*; this the great God glories in, *I live*, saith the Lord. and Christ saith the

same; not only, I shall live, as he saith of them, but, I do live; for he has *life in himself, and lives for evermore*. We are not comfortless, while we know that our Redeemer lives. (2.) Therefore *you shall live also*. Note, The life of Christians is bound up in the life of Christ; as sure and as long as he lives, those that by faith are united to him shall live also; they shall live spiritually, a divine life in communion with God. This life is hid with Christ; if the head and root live, the members and branches live also. They shall *live eternally*; their bodies shall rise in the virtue of Christ's resurrection; it will be well with them in the world to come. It cannot but be well with all that are his, Isa. xxvi. 19.

3. You shall have the assurance of this (v. 20): *At that day*, when I am glorified, when the Spirit is poured out, *you shall know more clearly and certainly than you do now that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you*. (1.) These glorious mysteries will be fully known in heaven: *At that day*, when I shall receive you to myself, you shall know perfectly that which now you see through a glass darkly. Now it appears not *what we shall be*, but then it will appear what we were. (2.) They were more fully known after the pouring out of the Spirit upon the apostles; at that day divine light should shine, and their eyes should see more clearly, their knowledge should greatly advance and increase then, would become more extensive and more distinct, and like the blind man's at the second touch of Christ's hand, who at first only *saw men as trees walking*. (3.) They are known by all that receive the Spirit of truth, to their abundant satisfaction, for in the knowledge of this is founded their *fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ*. They know, [1.] That *Christ is in the Father*, is one with the Father, by their experience of what he has wrought for them and in them; they find what an admirable consent and harmony there is between Christianity and natural religion, that that is grafted into this, and so they know that *Christ is in the Father*. [2.] That *Christ is in them*; experienced Christians know by the Spirit that Christ abides in them, 1 John iii. 24. [3.] That they are in Christ, for the relation is mutual, and equally near on both sides, Christ in them and they in Christ, which speaks an intimate and inseparable union; in the virtue of which it is that *because he lives they shall live also*. Note, First, Union with Christ is the life of believers; and their relation to him, and to God through him, is their felicity. Secondly, The knowledge of this union is their unspeakable joy and satisfaction; they were now in Christ, and he in them, but he speaks of it as a further act of grace that they should know it, and have the comfort of it. An interest in Christ and the knowledge of it are sometimes separated.

III. He promises that he would love them,



and manifest himself to them. v. 21—24. Here observe,

1. Who they are whom Christ will look upon, and accept, as lovers of him; those that *have his commandments, and keep them*. By this Christ shows that the kind things he here said to his disciples were intended not for those only that were *now* his followers, but for all that should *believe in him through their word*. Here is, (1.) The duty of those who claim the dignity of being disciples. Having Christ's commandments, we must keep them; as Christians in name and profession we have Christ's commandments, we have them sounding in our ears, written before our eyes, we have the knowledge of them; but this is not enough; would we approve ourselves Christians indeed, we must keep them. Having them in our heads, we must keep them in our hearts and lives. (2.) The dignity of those that do the duty of disciples. They are looked upon by Christ to be such as love him. Not those that have the greatest wit and know how to talk for him, or the greatest estate to lay out for him, but those that *keep his commandments*. Note, The surest evidence of our love to Christ is obedience to the laws of Christ. Such is the love of a subject to his sovereign, a dutiful, respectful, obedient love, a conformity to his will, and satisfaction in his wisdom.

2. What returns he will make to them for their love; rich returns; there is no love lost upon Christ. (1.) They shall have the Father's love: *He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father*. We could not love God if he did not first, out of his good-will to us, give us his grace to love him; but there is a love of complacency promised to those that do love God, Prov. viii. 17. He loves them, and lets them know that he loves them, smiles upon them, and embraces them. God so loves the Son as to love all those that love him. (2.) They shall have Christ's love: *And I will love him*, as God-man, as Mediator. God will love him as a Father, and I will love him as a brother, an elder brother. The Creator will love him, and be the felicity of his being; the Redeemer will love him, and be the protector of his well-being. In the nature of God, nothing shines more brightly than this, that *God is love*. And in the undertaking of Christ nothing appears more glorious than this, that *he loved us*. Now both these loves are the crown and comfort, the *grace and glory*, which shall be to all those that *love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*. Christ was now leaving his disciples, but promises to continue his love to them; for he not only retains a kindness for believers, though absent, but is doing them kindness while absent, for he bears them on his heart, and ever lives interceding for them. (3.) They shall have the comfort of that love: *I will manifest myself to him*. Some understand it of Christ's showing himself alive to his disciples after his resurrection;

but, being promised to all that *love him and keep his commandments*, it must be construed so as to extend to them. There is a spiritual manifestation of Christ and his love made to all believers. When he enlightens their minds to know his love, and the dimensions of it (Eph. iii. 18, 19), enlivens their graces, and draws them into exercise, and thus enlarges their comforts in himself—when he clears up the evidences of their interest in him, and gives them tokens of his love, experience of his tenderness, and earnestness of his kingdom and glory,—then he manifests himself to them; and Christ is manifested to none but those to whom he is pleased to manifest himself.

3. What occurred upon Christ's making this promise.

(1.) One of the disciples expresses his wonder and surprise at it, v. 22. Observe, [1.] Who it was that said this—*Judas, not Iscariot*. Judah, or Judas, was a famous name; the most famous tribe in Israel was that of Judah; two of Christ's disciples were of that name: one of them was the traitor, the other was the brother of James (Luke vi. 16), one of those that were akin to Christ, Matt. xiii. 55. He is called *Lebbeus* and *Thaddeus*, was the penman of the last of the epistles, which in our translation, for distinction's sake, we call *the epistle of Jude*. This was he that spoke here. Observe, *First*, There was a very good man, and a very bad man, called by the same name; for names commend us not to God, nor do they make men worse. Judas the apostle was never the worse, nor Judas the apostate ever the better, for being namesakes. But, *Secondly*, The evangelist carefully distinguishes between them; when he speaks of this pious Judas, he adds, *not Iscariot*. Take heed of mistaking; let us not confound the precious and the vile. [2.] What he said—*Lord how is it?* which intimates either, *First*, the weakness of his understanding. So some take it. He expected the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, that it should appear in external pomp and power, such as all the world would wonder after. "How, then," thinks he, "should it be confined to us only?" *τί γέγονεν*—"what is the matter now, that thou wilt not show thyself openly as is expected, that the Gentiles may come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising?" Note, We create difficulties to ourselves by mistaking the nature of Christ's kingdom, as if it were of this world. Or, *Secondly*, as expressing the strength of his affections, and the humble and thankful sense he had of Christ's distinguishing favours to them: *Lord, how is it?* He is amazed at the condescensions of divine grace, as David, 2 Sam. vii. 18. What is there in us to deserve so great a favour? Note, 1. Christ's manifesting himself to his disciples is done in a distinguishing way—to them, and *not to the world that sits in darkness*; to the *base*, and not to the *mighty* and



noble; to babes, and not to the wise and prudent. Distinguishing favours are very obliging; considering who are passed by, and who are pitched upon. 2. It is justly *marvellous in our eyes*: for it is unaccountable, and must be resolved into free and sovereign grace. *Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.*

(2.) Christ, in answer hereto, explains and confirms what he had said, v. 23, 24. He overlooks what infirmity there was in what Judas spoke, and goes on with his comforts.

[1.] He further explains the condition of the promise, which was loving him, and keeping his commandments. And, as to this, he shows what an inseparable connection there is between love and obedience; love is the root, obedience is the fruit. *First*, Where a sincere love to Christ is in the heart, there will be obedience: "*If a man love me* indeed, that love will be such a commanding constraining principle in him, that, no question, *he will keep my words.*" Where there is true love to Christ there is a value for his favour, a veneration for his authority, and an entire surrender of the whole man to his direction and government. Where love is, duty follows of course, is easy and natural, and flows from a principle of gratitude. *Secondly*, On the other hand, where there is no true love to Christ there will be no care to obey him: *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings*, v. 24. This comes in here as a discovery of those that *do not love Christ*: whatever they pretend, certainly those do not love him that believe not his truths, and obey not his laws, to whom Christ's sayings are but as idle tales, which he heeds not, or hard sayings, which he likes not. It is also a reason why Christ will not manifest himself to the world that doth not *love him*, because they put this affront upon him, not to *keep his sayings*; why should Christ be familiar with those that will be strange to him?

[2.] He further explains the promise (v. 23): *If a man thus love me, I will manifest myself to him.* *First*, *My Father will love him*; this he had said before (v. 21), and here repeats it for the confirming of our faith; because it is hard to imagine that the great God should make those the objects of his love that had made themselves *vessels of his wrath*. Jude wondered that Christ should *manifest himself to them*; but this answers it, "*If my Father love you, why should not I be free with you?*" *Secondly*, *We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* This explains the meaning of Christ's manifesting himself to him, and magnifies the favour. 1. Not only, *I will*, but, *We will, I and the Father*, who, in this, *are one*. See v. 9. The light and love of God are communicated to man in the light and love of the Redeemer, so that wherever Christ is formed the image of God is stamped. 2. Not only, "*I will show myself to him at a distance*," but, "*We will come to him, to be near him, to be with him,*" such are the

powerful influences of divine graces and comforts upon the souls of those that love Christ in sincerity. 3. Not only, "*I will give him a transient view of me, or make him a short and running visit*," but, *We will take up our abode with him*, which denotes complacency in him and constancy to him. God will not only love obedient believers, but he will take a pleasure in loving them, will rest in love to them, Zeph. iii. 17. He will be with them as at his home.

[3.] He gives a good reason both to bind us to observe the condition and encourage us to depend upon the promise. *The word which you hear is not mine, but his that sent me*, v. 24. To this purport he had often spoken (ch. vii. 16; viii. 28; xii. 44), and here it comes in very pertinently. *First*, the stress of duty is laid upon the precept of Christ as our rule, and justly, for that word of Christ which we are to keep is the Father's word, and his will the Father's will. *Secondly*, The stress of our comfort is laid upon the promise of Christ. But forasmuch as, in dependence upon that promise, we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and quit all, it concerns us to enquire whether the security be sufficient for us to venture our all upon; and this satisfies us that it is, that the promise is not Christ's bare word, but the Father's which sent him, which therefore we may rely upon.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. 26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. 27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Two things Christ here comforts his disciples with:—

I. That they should be under the tuition of his Spirit, v. 25, 26, where we may observe,

1. The reflection Christ would have them make upon the instructions he had given them: *These things have I spoken unto you* (referring to all the good lessons he had taught them, since they entered themselves into his school), *being yet present with you*. This intimates, (1.) That what he had said he did not retract nor unsay, but ratify it, or stand to it. What he had spoken he had spoken, and would abide by it. (2.) That he had improved the opportunity of his bodily presence with them to the utmost: "As long as I have been yet present with them, you know I have lost no time." Note, When our teachers are about to be removed from us we should call to mind what they have spoken, *being yet present with us*.

2. The encouragement given them to expect another teacher, and that Christ would find out a way of speaking to them after his departure from them, v. 26. He had told them before that the Father would give them this other comforter (v. 16), and here he returns to speak of it again; for as the promise of the Messiah had been, so the promise of the Spirit now was, the consolation of Israel. Two things he here tells them further concerning the sending of the Holy Ghost:—

(1.) On whose account he should be sent: "The Father will send him *in my name*; that is, for *my sake*, at my special instance and request;" or, "as my agent and representative." He came in his Father's name, as his ambassador: the Spirit comes in his name, as resident in his absence, to carry on his undertaking, and to ripen things for his second coming. Hence he is called *the Spirit of Christ*, for he pleads his cause, and does his work.

(2.) On what errand he should be sent; two things he shall do:—[1.] *He shall teach you all things*, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Christ was a teacher to his disciples; if he leave them now that they have made so little proficiency, what will become of them? Why, the Spirit shall teach them, shall be their standing tutor. He shall teach them all things necessary for them either to learn themselves, or to teach others. For those that would teach the things of God must first themselves be taught of God; this is the Spirit's work. See Isa. lix. 21. [2.] *He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.* Many a good lesson Christ had taught them, which they had forgotten, and which would be to seek when they had occasion for it. Many things they did not retain the remembrance of, because they did not rightly understand the meaning of them. The Spirit shall not teach them a new gospel, but bring to their minds that which they had been taught, by leading them into the understanding of it. The apostles were all of them to preach, and some of them to write, the things that Jesus did and taught, to transmit them to distant nations and future ages; now, if they had been left to themselves herein, some needful things might have been forgotten, others misrepresented, through the treachery of their memories; therefore the Spirit is promised to enable them truly to relate and record what Christ said unto them. And to all the saints the Spirit of grace is given to be a remembrancer, and to him by faith and prayer we should commit the keeping of what we hear and know.

II. That they should be under the influence of his peace (v. 27): *Peace I leave with you.* When Christ was about to leave the world he *made his will*. His soul he committed to his Father; his body he bequeathed to Joseph, to be decently interred; his clothes fell to the soldiers; his mother he

left to the care of John: but what should he leave to his poor disciples, that had left all for him? Silver and gold he had none; but he left them that which was infinitely better, *his peace*. "*I leave you*, but *I leave my peace with you*. I not only give you a title to it, but put you in possession of it." He did not part in anger, but in love; for this was his farewell, *Peace I leave with you*, as a dying father leaves portions to his children; and this is a *worthy portion*. Observe,

1. The legacy that is here bequeathed—*Peace, my peace*. Peace is put for all good, and Christ has left us all needful good, all that is really and truly good, all the purchased promised good. Peace is put for reconciliation and love; the peace bequeathed is peace with God, peace with one another; peace *in our own bosoms* seems to be especially meant; a tranquillity of mind arising from a sense of our justification before God. It is the counterpart of our pardons, and the composure of our minds. This Christ calls *his peace*, for he is himself our peace, Eph. ii. 14. It is the peace he purchased for us and preached to us, and on which the angels congratulated men at his birth, Luke ii. 14.

2. To whom this legacy is bequeathed—"To you, my disciples and followers, that will be exposed to trouble, and have need of peace; to you that are the sons of peace, and are qualified to receive it." This legacy was left to them as the representatives of the church, to them and their successors, to them and all true Christians in all ages.

3. In what manner it is left: *Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* That is, (1.) "I do not compliment you with *Peace be unto you*; no, it is not a mere formality, but a real blessing." (2.) "The peace I give is of such a nature that the smiles of the world cannot give it, nor the frowns of the world take it away." Or, (3.) "The gifts I give to you are not such as this world gives to its children and votaries, to whom it is kind." The world's gifts concern only the body and time; Christ's gifts enrich the soul for eternity: the world gives lying vanities, and that which will cheat us; Christ gives substantial blessings, which will never fail us: the world gives and takes; Christ gives a good part that shall *never be taken away*. (4.) The peace which Christ gives is infinitely more valuable than that which the world gives. The world's peace begins in ignorance, consists with sin, and ends in endless troubles; Christ's peace begins in grace, consists with no allowed sin, and ends at length in everlasting peace. As is the difference between a killing lethargy and a reviving refreshing sleep, such is the difference between Christ's peace and the world's.

4. What use they should make of it: *Let not your heart be troubled*, for any evils past or present, *neither let it be afraid of any evil to come*. Note, Those that are interested in



the covenant of grace, and entitled to the peace which Christ gives, ought not to yield to overwhelming griefs and fears. This comes in here as the conclusion of the whole matter; he had said (v. 1), *Let not your heart be troubled*, and here he repeats it as that for which he had now given sufficient reason.

28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come *again* unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. 30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise let us go hence.

Christ here gives his disciples another reason why their hearts should not be troubled for his going away; and that is, because his heart was not. And here he tells them what it was that enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame, that they might look unto him, and run with patience. He comforted himself,

I. That, though he went away, he should come again: "*You have heard how I have said, and now I say it again, I go away, and come again.*" Note, What we have heard of the doctrine of Christ, especially concerning his second coming, we have need to be told again and again. When we are under the power of any transport of passion, grief, or fear, or care, we forget that Christ will come again. See Phil. iv. 5. Christ encouraged himself with *this*, in his sufferings and death, that he should come again, and the same should comfort us in our departure at death; we go away to come again; the leave we take of our friends at that parting is only a good night, not a final farewell. See 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

II. That he went to his Father: "*If you loved me, as by your sorrow you say you do, you would rejoice instead of mourning, because, though I leave you, yet I said, I go unto the Father, not only mine, but yours, which will be my advancement and your advantage; for my Father is greater than I.*" Observe here, 1. It is matter of joy to Christ's disciples that he is gone to the Father, to take possession for orphans, and make intercession for transgressors. His departure had a bright side as well as a dark side. Therefore he sent this message after his resurrection (ch. xx. 17), *I ascend to my Father and your Father*, as most comfortable. 2. The reason of this is, because *the Father*

*is greater than he*, which, if it be a proper proof of that for which it is alleged (as no doubt it is), must be understood thus, that his state with his Father would be much more excellent and glorious than his present state; his returning to his Father (so Dr. Hammond) would be the advancing of him to a much higher condition than that which he was now in. Or thus, His going to the Father himself, and bringing all his followers to him there, was the ultimate end of his undertaking, and therefore greater than the means. Thus Christ raises the thoughts and expectations of his disciples to something greater than that in which now they thought all their happiness bound up. The kingdom of the Father, wherein he shall be all in all, will be greater than the mediatorial kingdom. 3. The disciples of Christ should show that they love him by their rejoicing in the glories of his exaltation, rather than by lamenting the sorrows of his humiliation, and rejoicing that he is gone to his Father, where he would be, and where we shall be shortly with him. Many that love Christ, let their love run out in a wrong channel; they think if they love him they must be continually in pain because of him; whereas those that love him should dwell at ease in him, should rejoice in Christ Jesus.

III. That his going away, compared with the prophecies which went before of it, would be a means of confirming the faith of his disciples (v. 29): *I have told you before it come to pass that I must die and rise again, and ascend to the Father, and send the Comforter, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe.*" See this reason, ch. xiii. 19; xvi. 4. Christ told his disciples of his death, though he knew it would both puzzle them and grieve them, because it would afterwards redound to the confirmation of their faith in two things:—1. That he who foretold these things had a divine prescience, and knew beforehand what a day would bring forth. When St. Paul was going to Jerusalem, he knew not the things that did abide him there, but Christ did. 2. That the things foretold were according to the divine purpose and designation, not sudden resolves, but the counterparts of an eternal counsel. Let them therefore not be troubled at that which would be for the confirmation of their faith, and so would redound to their real benefit; for the trial of our faith is very precious, though it cost us present heaviness, through manifold temptations, 1 Pet. i. 6.

IV. That he was sure of a victory over Satan, with whom he knew he was to have a struggle in his departure (v. 30): "*Henceforth I will not talk much with you, having not much to say, but what may be adjourned to the pouring out of the Spirit.*" He had a great deal of good talk with them after this (ch. xv. and xvi), but, in comparison with what he had said, it was not much. His time was now short, and he therefore spoke

largely to them now, because the opportunity would soon be over. Note, We should always endeavour to talk to the purpose, because perhaps we may not have time to talk much. We know not how soon our breath may be stopped, and therefore should be always breathing something that is good. When we come to be sick and die, perhaps we may not be capable of talking much to those about us; and therefore what good counsel we have to give them, let us give it while we are in health. One reason why he would not talk much with them was because he had now other work to apply himself to: *The prince of this world comes*. He called the devil the *prince of this world*, ch. xii. 31. The disciples dreamed of their Master being the prince of this world, and they worldly princes under him. But Christ tells them that the *prince of this world* was his enemy, and so were the *princes of this world*, that were actuated and ruled by him, 1 Cor. ii. 8. But *he hath nothing in me*. Observe here, 1. The prospect Christ had of an approaching conflict, not only with men, but with the powers of darkness. The devil had set upon him with his temptations (Matt. iv.), had offered him the *kingdoms of this world*, if he would hold them as tributary to him, with an eye to which Christ calls him, in disdain, *the prince of this world*. Then the devil departed from him for a season; "But now," says Christ, "I see him rallying again, preparing to make a furious onset, and so to gain by terrors that which he could not gain by allurements;" to frighten from his undertaking, when he could not entice from it. Note, The foresight of a temptation gives us great advantage in our resistance of it; for, being forewarned, we should be fore-armed. While we are here, we may see Satan continually coming against us, and ought therefore to be always upon our guard. 2. The assurance he had of good success in the conflict: *He hath nothing in me*, οὐκ ἔχει οὐδέν—*He hath nothing at all*. (1.) There was no guilt in Christ to give authority to the *prince of this world* in his terrors. The devil is said to have the *power of death* (Heb. ii. 14); the Jews called him the *angel of death*, as an executioner. Now Christ having done no evil, Satan had no legal power against him, and therefore, though he prevailed to crucify him, he could not prevail to terrify him; though he hurried him to death, yet not to despair. When Satan comes to disquiet us, he has something in us to perplex us with, for we have all sinned; but, when he would disturb Christ, he found no occasion against him. (2.) There was no corruption in Christ, to give advantage to the *prince of this world* in his temptations. He could not crush his undertaking by drawing him to sin, because there was nothing sinful in him, nothing irregular for his temptations to fasten upon, no tinder for him to strike fire into; such was the spotless purity of his nature that he

was above the possibility of sinning. The more Satan's interest in us is crushed and decays, the more comfortably may we expect sufferings and death.

V. That his departure was in compliance with, and obedience to, his Father. Satan could not force his life from him, and yet he would die: *that the world may know that I love the Father*, v. 31. We may take this,

1. As confirming what he had often said, that his undertaking, as Mediator, was a demonstration to the world, (1.) Of his compliance with the Father; hereby it appeared that he loved the Father. As it was an evidence of his love to man that he died for his salvation, so it was of his love to God that he died for his glory and the accomplishing of his purposes. Let the world know that between the Father and the Son there is no love lost. *As the Father loved the Son, and gave all things into his hands; so the Son loved the Father, and gave his spirit into his hand*. (2.) Of his obedience to his Father: "*As the Father gave me commandment, even so I did*—did the thing commanded in the manner commanded." Note, The best evidence of our love to the Father is our doing as he hath given us commandment. As Christ loved the Father, and obeyed him, *even to the death*, so we must love Christ, and obey him. Christ's eye to the Father's commandment, obliging him to suffer and die, bore him up with cheerfulness, and overcame the reluctancies of nature; this took off the offence of the cross, that what he did was by order from the Father. The command of God is sufficient to bear us out in that which is most disputed by others, and therefore should be sufficient to bear us up in that which is most difficult to ourselves: *This is the will of him that made me, that sent me*.

2. As concluding what he had now said; having brought it to this, here he leaves it: *that the world may know that I love the Father*. You shall see how cheerfully I can meet the appointed cross: "*Arise, let us go hence to the garden*;" so some; or, to *Jerusalem*. When we talk of troubles at a distance, it is easy to say, *Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*; but when it comes to the pinch, when an unavoidable cross lies in the way of duty, then to say, "*Arise, let us go to meet it*," instead of going out of our way to miss it, this lets the world know that we love the Father. If this discourse was at the close of the passover-supper, it should seem that at these words he arose from the table, and retired into the drawing-room, where he might the more freely carry on the discourse with his disciples in the following chapters, and pray with them. Dr. Goodwin's remark upon this is, that Christ mentioning the great motive of his sufferings, his Father's commandment, was in all haste to go forth to suffer and die, was afraid of slipping the time of Judas's meeting him: *Arise*, says he, *let us go hence*:



but he looks upon the glass, as it were, sees it not quite out, and therefore sits down again, and preaches another sermon. Now, (1.) In these words he gives his disciples an encouragement to follow him. He does not say, *I must go*; but, *Let us go*. He calls them out to no hardships but what he himself goes before them in as their leader. They had promised they would not desert him: "Come," says he, "*let us go* then; let us see how you will make the words good." (2.) He gives them an example, teaching them at all times, especially in suffering times, to sit loose to all things here below, and often to think and speak of leaving them. Though we sit easy, and in the midst of the delights of an agreeable conversation, yet we must not think of being here always: *Arise, let us go hence*. If it was at the close of the paschal and eucharistical supper, it teaches us that the solemnities of our communion with God are not to be constant in this world. When we sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and say, *It is good to be here*; yet we must think of rising and going hence; going down from the mount.

## CHAP. XV.

It is generally agreed that Christ's discourse in this and the next chapter was at the close of the last supper, the night in which he was betrayed, and it is a continued discourse, not interrupted as that in the foregoing chapter was; and what he chooses to discourse of is very pertinent to the present sad occasion of a farewell sermon. Now that he was about to leave them, 1. They would be tempted to leave him, and return to Moses again; and therefore he tells them how necessary it was that they should by faith adhere to him and abide in him. 11. They would be tempted to grow strange one to another; and therefore he presses it upon them to love one another, and to keep up that communion when he was gone which had hitherto been their comfort. 111. They would be tempted to shrink from their apostleship, when they met with hardships; and therefore he prepares them to bear the shock of the world's ill will. There are four words to which his discourse in this chapter may be reduced; 1. Fruit, ver. 1-8. 2. Love, ver. 9-17. 3. Hatred, ver. 18-25. 4. The Comforter, ver. 26, 27.

**I** AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is

my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Here Christ discourses concerning the fruit, *the fruits of the Spirit*, which his disciples were to bring forth, under the similitude of a vine. Observe here,

I. The doctrine of this similitude; what notion we ought to have of it.

1. That Jesus Christ is *the vine, the true vine*. It is an instance of the humility of Christ that he is pleased to speak of himself under low and humble comparisons. He that is *the Sun of righteousness, and the bright and morning Star*, compares himself to a vine. The church, which is Christ mystical, is a vine (Ps. lxxx. 8), so is Christ, who is the church seminal. Christ and his church are thus set forth. (1.) He is *the vine*, planted in the vineyard, and not a spontaneous product; planted in the earth, for he is *the Word made flesh*. The vine has an unsightly unpromising outside; and Christ had *no form nor comeliness*, Isa. liii. 2. The vine is a spreading plant, and Christ will be known as *salvation to the ends of the earth*. The fruit of the vine honours God and cheers man (Judg. ix. 13), so does the fruit of Christ's mediation; it is *better than gold*, Prov. viii. 19. (2.) He is *the true vine*, as truth is opposed to pretence and counterfeit; he is really a fruitful plant, a plant of renown. He is not like that wild vine which deceived those who gathered of it (2 Kings iv. 39), but a true vine. Unfruitful trees are said to *lie* (Hab. iii. 17. *marg.*), but Christ is a vine that will not deceive. Whatever excellency there is in any creature, serviceable to man, it is but a shadow of that grace which is in Christ for his people's good. He is that true vine typified by Judah's vine, which enriched him with the blood of the grape (Gen. xlix. 11), by Joseph's vine, the branches of which *ran over the wall* (Gen. xlix. 22), by Israel's vine, under which he *dwelt safely*, 1 Kings iv. 25.

2. That believers are branches of this vine, which supposes that Christ is the root of the vine. The root is unseen, and our *life is hid with Christ*; the root bears the tree (Rom. xi. 18), diffuses sap to it, and is all in all to its flourishing and fruitfulness; and in Christ are all supports and supplies. The branches of the vine are many, some on one side of the house or wall, others on the other side; yet, meeting in the root, are all but one vine; thus all good Christians, though in place and opinion distant from each other, yet meet in Christ, the centre of their unity. Believers, like the branches of the vine, are weak, and insufficient to stand of themselves, but as they are borne up. See Ezek. xv. 2.

3. That *the Father is the husbandman, γεωργός—the land-worker*. Though the earth is *the Lord's*, it yields him no fruit unless he work it. God has not only a propriety in, but a care of, the vine and all the branches.

He hath planted, and watered, and gives the increase; for we are God's husbandry, 1 Cor. iii. 9. See Isa. v. 1, 2; xxvii. 2, 3. He had an eye upon Christ, the root, and upheld him, and made him to flourish out of a dry ground. He has an eye upon all the branches, and prunes them, and watches over them, that nothing hurt them. Never was any husbandman so wise, so watchful, about his vineyard, as God is about his church, which therefore must needs prosper.

II. The duty taught us by this similitude, which is to *bring forth fruit*, and, in order to this, to *abide* in Christ.

1 We must be fruitful. From a vine we look for grapes (Isa. v. 2), and from a Christian we look for Christianity; this is the *fruit*, a Christian temper and disposition, a Christian life and conversation, Christian devotions and Christian designs. We must honour God, and do good, and exemplify the purity and power of the religion we profess; and this is bearing fruit. The disciples here must be fruitful, as Christians, in all the *fruits of righteousness*, and as apostles, in diffusing the savour of the knowledge of Christ. To persuade them to this, he urges,

(1.) The doom of the unfruitful (v. 2): *They are taken away*. [1.] It is here intimated that there are many who pass for *branches* in Christ who yet do *not bear fruit*. Were they really united to Christ by faith, they would bear fruit; but being only tied to him by the thread of an outward profession, though they seem to be branches, they will soon be seen to be dry ones. Unfruitful professors are unfaithful professors; professors, and no more. It might be read, *Every branch that beareth not fruit in me, and it comes much to one; for those that do not bear fruit in Christ, and in his Spirit and grace, are as if they bore no fruit at all*, Hos. x. 1. [2.] It is here threatened that they shall be *taken away*, in justice to them and in kindness to the rest of the branches. From him that has not real union with Christ, and fruit produced thereby, *shall be taken away even that which he seemed to have*, Luke viii. 18. Some think this refers primarily to Judas.

(2.) The promise made to the fruitful: *He purgeth them, that they may bring forth more fruit*. Note, [1.] Further fruitfulness is the blessed reward of forward fruitfulness. The first blessing was, *Be fruitful*; and it is still a great blessing. [2.] Even fruitful branches, in order to their further fruitfulness, have need of purging or pruning; *καθαίρει—he taketh away that which is superfluous* and luxuriant, which hinders its growth and fruitfulness. The best have that in them which is peccant, *aliquid amputandum—something which should be taken away*; some notions, passions, or humours, that want to be purged away, which Christ has promised to do by his word, and Spirit, and providence; and these shall be taken off by degrees in the proper season. [3.] The purging of fruitful

branches, in order to their greater fruitfulness, is the care and work of the great husbandman, for his own glory.

(3.) The benefits which believers have by the doctrine of Christ, the power of which they should labour to exemplify in a fruitful conversation: *Now you are clean*, v. 3. [1.] Their society was clean, now that Judas was expelled by that word of Christ, *What thou doest, do quickly*; and till they were got clear of him *they were not all clean*. The word of Christ is a distinguishing word, and separates *between the precious and the vile*; it will purify *the church of the first-born* in the great dividing day. [2.] They were each of them clean, that is, sanctified, by the truth of Christ (ch. xvii. 17); that faith by which they received the word of Christ *purified their hearts*, Acts xv. 9. The Spirit of grace by the word refined them from the dross of the world and the flesh, and purged out of them *the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees*, from which, when they saw their inveterate rage and enmity against their Master, they were now pretty well cleansed. Apply it to all believers. The word of Christ is spoken to them; there is a cleansing virtue in that word, as it works grace, and works out corruption. It cleanses as fire cleanses the gold from its dross, and as physic cleanses the body from its disease. We then evidence that we are cleansed by the word when we *bring forth fruit unto holiness*. Perhaps here is an allusion to the law concerning vineyards in Canaan; the fruit of them was as unclean, and uncircumcised, the first three years after it was planted, and *the fourth year it was to be holiness of praise unto the Lord*; and then it was clean, Lev. xix. 23, 24. The disciples had now been three years under Christ's instruction; and *now you are clean*.

(4.) The glory that will redound to God by our fruitfulness, with the comfort and honour that will come to ourselves by it, v. 8. *If we bear much fruit*, [1.] Herein our Father will be glorified. The fruitfulness of the apostles, as such, in the diligent discharge of their office, would be to the glory of God in the conversion of souls, and the offering of them up to him, Rom. xv. 9, 16. The fruitfulness of all Christians, in a lower or narrower sphere, is to the glory of God. By the eminent good works of Christians many are brought to *glorify our Father who is in heaven*. [2.] So shall we be Christ's disciples indeed, approving ourselves so, and making it to appear that we are really what we call ourselves. So shall we both evidence our discipleship and adorn it, and be to our Master *for a name and a praise*, and a glory, that is, disciples indeed, Jer. xiii. 11. So shall we be owned by our Master in the great day, and have the reward of disciples, a share *in the joy of our Lord*. And the more fruit we bring forth, the more we abound in that which is good, the more he is glorified.

2. In order to our fruitfulness, we must



abide in Christ, must keep up our union with him by faith, and do all we do in religion in the virtue of that union. Here is,

(1.) The duty enjoined (v. 4): *Abide in me, and I in you.* Note, It is the great concern of all Christ's disciples constantly to keep up a dependence upon Christ and communion with him, habitually to adhere to him, and actually to derive supplies from him. Those that are come to Christ must abide in him: "*Abide in me, by faith; and I in you, by my Spirit; abide in me, and then fear not but I will abide in you;*" for the communion between Christ and believers never fails on his side. We must abide in Christ's word by a regard to it, and it in us as a *light to our feet*. We must abide in Christ's merit as our righteousness and plea, and it in us as our support and comfort. The knot of the branch abides in the vine, and the sap of the vine abides in the branch, and so there is a constant communication between them.

(2.) The necessity of our abiding in Christ, in order to our fruitfulness (v. 4, 5): "*You cannot bring forth fruit, except you abide in me; but, if you do, you bring forth much fruit; for, in short, without me, or separate from me, you can do nothing.*" So necessary is it to our comfort and happiness that we be fruitful, that the best argument to engage us to abide in Christ is, that otherwise we cannot be fruitful. [1.] Abiding in Christ is necessary in order to our doing much good. He that is constant in the exercise of faith in Christ and love to him, that lives upon his promises and is led by his Spirit, *bringeth forth much fruit*, he is very serviceable to God's glory, and his own account in the great day. Note, Union with Christ is a noble principle, productive of all good. A life of faith in the Son of God is incomparably the most excellent life a man can live in this world; it is regular and even, pure and heavenly; it is useful and comfortable, and all that answers the end of life. [2.] It is necessary to our doing any good. It is not only a means of cultivating and increasing what good there is already in us, but it is the root and spring of all good: "*Without me you can do nothing: not only no great thing, heal the sick, or raise the dead, but nothing.*" Note, We have as necessary and constant a dependence upon the grace of the Mediator for all the actions of the spiritual and divine life as we have upon the providence of the Creator for all the actions of the natural life; for, as to both, it is in the divine power that *we live, move, and have our being*. Abstracted from the merit of Christ, we can do nothing towards our justification; and from the Spirit of Christ nothing towards our sanctification. *Without Christ we can do nothing* aright, nothing that will be fruit pleasing to God or profitable to ourselves, 2 Cor. iii. 5. We depend upon Christ, not only as the vine upon the wall, for support; but, as the branch on the root, for sap.

(3.) The fatal consequences of forsaking

Christ (v. 6): *If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch.* This is a description of the fearful state of hypocrites that are *not in Christ*, and of apostates that *abide not in Christ*. [1.] They are cast forth as dry and withered branches, which are plucked off because they cumber the tree. It is just that those should have no benefit by Christ who think they have no need of him; and that those who reject him should be rejected by him. Those that abide not in Christ shall be abandoned by him; they are left to themselves, to fall into scandalous sin, and then are justly cast out of the communion of the faithful. [2.] They are withered, as a branch broken off from the tree. Those that abide not in Christ, though they may flourish awhile in a plausible, at least a passable profession, yet in a little time wither and come to nothing. Their parts and gifts wither; their zeal and devotion wither; their credit and reputation wither; their hopes and comforts wither, Job viii. 11—13. Note, Those that bear no fruit, after awhile will bear no leaves. *How soon is that fig-tree withered away* which Christ has cursed! [3.] *Men gather them.* Satan's agents and emissaries pick them up, and make an easy prey of them. Those that fall off from Christ presently fall in with sinners; and the sheep that wander from Christ's fold, the devil stands ready to seize them for himself. When the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, an evil spirit possessed him. [4.] *They cast them into the fire*, that is, they are cast into the fire; and those who seduce them and draw them to sin do in effect cast them there; for they *make them children of hell*. Fire is the fittest place for withered branches, for they are good for nothing else, Ezek. xv. 2—4. [5.] *They are burned*; this follows of course, but it is here added very emphatically, and makes the threatening very terrible. They will not be consumed in a moment, *like thorns under a pot* (Eccl. vii. 6), but *kaíraí*, they are burning for ever in a fire, which not only cannot be quenched, but will never spend itself. This comes of quitting Christ, this is the end of barren trees. Apostates are *twice dead* (Jude 12), and when it is said, *They are cast into the fire and are burned*, it speaks as if they were twice damned. Some apply men's gathering them to the ministry of the angels in the great day, when they shall gather out of Christ's kingdom all things that offend, and shall *bundle the tares for the fire*.

(4.) The blessed privilege which those have that *abide in Christ* (v. 7): *If my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will of my Father in my name, and it shall be done.* See here, [1.] How our union with Christ is maintained—by the word: *If you abide in me; he had said before, and I in you*; here he explains himself, *and my words abide in you*; for it is in the word that Christ is set before us, and offered to us, Rom. x. 6—8. It is in the



word that we receive and embrace him; and so where the *word of Christ dwells richly* there Christ dwells. If the word be our constant guide and monitor, if it be in us as at home, then we abide in Christ, and he in us.

[2.] How our communion with Christ is maintained—by prayer: *You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done to you.* And what can we desire more than to have what we will for the asking? Note, Those that abide in Christ as their heart's delight shall have, through Christ, their heart's desire. If we have Christ, we shall want nothing that is good for us. Two things are implied in this promise:—*First*, That if we abide in Christ, and his word in us, we shall not ask any thing but what is proper to be done for us. The promises abiding in us lie ready to be turned into prayers; and the prayers so regulated cannot but speed. *Secondly*, That if we abide in Christ and his word we shall have such an interest in God's favour and Christ's mediation that we shall have an answer of peace to all our prayers.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. 15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. 16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. 17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

Christ, who is love itself, is here discoursing concerning love, a fourfold love.

1. Concerning the Father's love to him; and concerning this he here tells us, 1. That the Father did love him (v. 9): *As the Father hath loved me.* He loved him as Mediator: *This is my beloved Son.* He was the Son of

his love. He loved him, and gave *all things into his hand*; and yet so loved the world as to deliver him up for us all. When Christ was entering upon his sufferings he comforted himself with this, that his Father loved him. Those whom God loves as a Father may despise the hatred of all the world. 2. That he abode in his Father's love, v. 10. He continually loved his Father, and was beloved of him. Even when he was made sin and a curse for us, and *it pleased the Lord to bruise him*, yet he abode in his Father's love. See Ps. lxxxix. 33. Because he continued to love his Father, he went cheerfully through his sufferings, and therefore his Father continued to love him. 3. That therefore he abode in his Father's love because he kept his Father's law: *I have kept my Father's commandments*, as Mediator, and so *abide in his love*. Hereby he showed that he continued to love his Father, that he went on, and went through, with his undertaking, and therefore the Father continued to love him. His soul *delighted in him*, because he *did not fail, nor was discouraged*, Isa. xlii. 1—4. We having broken the law of creation, and thereby thrown ourselves out of the love of God; Christ satisfied for us by obeying the law of redemption, and so he abode in his love, and restored us to it.

II. Concerning his own love to his disciples. Though he leaves them, he loves them. And observe here,

1. The pattern of this love: *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.* A strange expression of the condescending grace of Christ! As the Father loved him, who was most worthy, he loved them, who were most unworthy. The Father loved him as his Son, and he loves them as his children. *The Father gave all things into his hand*; so, with himself, *he freely giveth us all things*. The Father loved him as Mediator, as head of the church, and the great trustee of divine grace and favour, which he had not for himself only, but for the benefit of those for whom he was entrusted; and, says he, "I have been a faithful trustee. As the Father has committed his love to me, so I transmit it to you." Therefore the Father was well pleased with him, that he might be well pleased with us in him; and loved him, that in him, as beloved, he might *make us accepted*, Eph. i. 6.

2. The proofs and products of this love, which are four:—

(1.) Christ loved his disciples, for he laid down his life for them (v. 13): *Greater love of love hath no man to show than this, to lay down his life for his friend*. And this is the love wherewith *Christ hath loved us*, he is our *ἀντίλυτρος*—*bail for us*, body for body, life for life, though he knew our insolvency, and foresaw how much the engagement would cost him. Observe here, [1.] The extent of the love of the children of men to one another. The highest proof of it is laying down one's life for a friend, to save his life, and perhaps there have been some such heroic



achievements of love, more than *plucking out one's own eyes*, Gal. iv. 15. *If all that a man has he will give for his life*, he that gives this for his friend gives all, and can give no more; this may sometimes be our duty, 1 John iii. 16. Paul was ambitious of the honour (Phil. ii. 17); and *for a good man some will even dare to die*, Rom. v. 7. It is love in the highest degree, which is *strong as death*. [2.] The excellency of the love of Christ beyond all other love. He has not only equalled, but exceeded, the most illustrious lovers. Others have laid down their lives, content that they should be taken from them; but Christ gave up his, was not merely passive, but made it his own act and deed. The life which others have laid down has been but of equal value with the life for which it was laid down, and perhaps less valuable; but Christ is infinitely more worth than ten thousand of us. Others have thus laid down their lives for their friends, but Christ laid down his for us *when we were enemies*, Rom. v. 8, 10. *Plusquam ferrea aut lapidea corda esse oportet, quæ non emolliet tum incomparabilis divini amoris suavitas—Those hearts must be harder than iron or stone which are not softened by such incomparable sweetness of divine love.*—Calvin.

(2.) Christ loved his disciples, for he took them into a covenant of friendship with himself, v. 14, 15. "If you approve yourselves by your obedience my disciples indeed, *you are my friends*, and shall be treated as friends." Note, The followers of Christ are the friends of Christ, and he is graciously pleased to call and account them so. Those that do the duty of his servants are admitted and advanced to the dignity of his friends. David had one servant in his court, and Solomon one in his, that was in a particular manner *the king's friend* (2 Sam. xv. 37; 1 Kings iv. 5); but this honour have all Christ's servants. We may in some particular instance befriend a stranger; but we espouse all the interests of a friend, and concern ourselves in all his cares: thus Christ takes believers to be his friends. He visits them and converses with them as his friends, bears with them and makes the best of them, is afflicted in their afflictions, and takes pleasure in their prosperity; he pleads for them in heaven and takes care of all their interests there. Have friends but one soul? He that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit*, 1 Cor. vi. 17. Though they often show themselves unfriendly, he is a friend that loves at all times. Observe how endearingly this is expressed here. [1.] He will not call them *servants*, though they call him *Master* and *Lord*. Those that would be like Christ in humility must not take a pride in insisting upon all occasions on their authority and superiority, but remember that their servants are their fellow-servants. But, [2.] He will call them *his friends*; he will not only love them, but will let them know it; for *in his tongue is the law of kindness*. After his resurrection he seems

to speak with more affectionate tenderness of and to his disciples than before *Go to my brethren*, ch. xx. 17. *Children, have you any meat?* ch. xxi. 5. But observe, though Christ called them *his friends*, they called themselves *his servants*: Peter, *a servant of Christ* (1 Pet. i. 1), and so James, ch. i. 1. The more honour Christ puts upon us, the more honour we should study to do him; the higher in his eyes, the lower in our own.

(3.) Christ loved his disciples, for he was very free in communicating his mind to them (v. 15): "Henceforth you shall not be kept so much in the dark as you have been, like *servants* that are only told their present work; but, when the Spirit is poured out, you shall know your Master's designs as *friends*. *All things that I have heard of my Father I have declared unto you.*" As to the secret will of God, there are many things which we must be content not to know; but, as to the revealed will of God, Jesus Christ has faithfully handed to us what he received of the Father, ch. i. 18; Matt. xi. 27. The great things relating to man's redemption Christ declared to his disciples, that they might declare them to others; they were the men of his counsel, Matt. xiii. 11.

(4.) Christ loved his disciples, for he chose and ordained them to be the prime instruments of his glory and honour in the world (v. 16): *I have chosen you, and ordained you*, His love to them appeared.

[1.] In their election, their election to their apostleship (ch. vi. 70): *I have chosen you twelve*. It did not begin on their side: *You have not chosen me, but I first chose you*. Why were they admitted to such an intimacy with him, employed in such an embassy for him, and endued with such power from on high? It was not owing to their wisdom and goodness in choosing him for their Master, but to his favour and grace in choosing them for his disciples. It is fit that Christ should have the choosing of his own ministers; still he does it by his providence and Spirit. Though ministers make that holy calling their own choice, Christ's choice is prior to theirs and directs and determines it. Of all that are chosen to grace and glory it may be said, *They have not chosen Christ, but he has chosen them*, Deut. vii. 7, 8.

[2.] In their ordination: *I have ordained you*; ἱθθα ἱμας—"I have put you into the ministry (1 Tim. i. 12), put you into commission." By this it appeared that he took them for his friends when he crowned their heads with such an honour, and filled their hands with such a trust. It was a mighty confidence he reposed in them, when he made them his ambassadors to negotiate the affairs of his kingdom in this lower world, and the prime ministers of state in the administration of it. The treasure of the gospel was committed to them, *First*, That it might be propagated: that you should go, ἵνα ἱμας ἐπάγῃτε—"that you should go as under a yoke or burden, for

the ministry is a work, and you that go about it must resolve to undergo a great deal; *that you may go from place to place all the world over, and bring forth fruit.*" They were ordained, not to sit still, but to go about, to be diligent in their work, and to lay out themselves unweariedly in doing good. They were ordained, not to beat the air, but to be instrumental in God's hand for the bringing of nations into obedience to Christ, Rom. i. 13. Note, Those whom Christ ordains should and shall be fruitful; should labour, and shall not labour in vain. *Secondly*, That it might be perpetuated; that the fruit may remain, that the good effect of their labours may continue in the world from generation to generation, to the end of time. The church of Christ was not to be a short-lived thing, as many of the sects of the philosophers, that were a nine days' wonder; it did not come up in a night, nor should it *perish in a night*, but be as the days of heaven. The sermons and writings of the apostles are transmitted to us, and we at this day are built upon that foundation, ever since the Christian church was first founded by the ministry of the apostles and seventy disciples; as one generation of ministers and Christians has passed away, still another has come. By virtue of that great charter (Matt. xxviii. 19), Christ has a church in the world, which, as our lawyers say of bodies corporate, does *not die*, but lives in a succession; and thus *their fruit remains* to this day, and shall do while the earth remains.

[3.] His love to them appeared in the interest they had at the throne of grace: *Whatsoever you shall ask of my Father, in my name, he will give it you.* Probably this refers in the first place to the power of working miracles which the apostles were clothed with, which was to be drawn out by prayer. "Whatever gifts are necessary to the furtherance of your labours, whatever help from heaven you have occasion for at any time, it is but ask and have." Three things are here hinted to us for our encouragement in prayer, and very encouraging they are. *First*, That we have a God to go to who is a Father; Christ here calls him *the Father*, both mine and yours; and the Spirit in the word and in the heart teaches us to cry, *Abba, Father*. *Secondly*, That we come in a good name. Whatever errand we come upon to the throne of grace according to God's will, we may with a humble boldness mention Christ's name in it, and plead that we are related to him, and he is concerned for us. *Thirdly*, That an answer of peace is promised us. What you come for shall be given you. This great promise made to that great duty keeps up a comfortable and gainful intercourse between heaven and earth.

III. Concerning the disciples' love to Christ, enjoined in consideration of the great love wherewith he had loved them. Three things he exhorts them to —

1. To continue in his love, v. 9. "Continue in your love to me, and in mine to you." Both may be taken in. We must place our happiness in the continuance of Christ's love to us, and make it our business to give continued proofs of our love to Christ, that nothing may tempt us to withdraw from him, or provoke him to withdraw from us. Note, All that love Christ should continue in their love to him, that is, be always loving him, and taking all occasions to show it, and love to the end. The disciples were to go out upon service for Christ, in which they would meet with many troubles; but, says Christ, "*Continue in my love.*" Keep up your love to me, and then all the troubles you meet with will be easy; love made seven years' hard service easy to Jacob. Let not the troubles you meet with for Christ's sake quench your love to Christ, but rather quicken it.

2. To let his joy remain in them, and fill them, v. 11. This he designed in those precepts and promises given them.

(1.) That his joy might remain in them. The words are so placed, in the original, that they may be read either, [1.] *That my joy in you may remain.* If they bring forth much fruit, and continue in his love, he will continue to rejoice in them as he had done. Note, Fruitful and faithful disciples are the joy of the Lord Jesus; he *rests in his love* to them, Zeph. iii. 17. As there is a transport of joy in heaven in the conversion of sinners, so there is a remaining joy in the perseverance of saints. Or, [2.] *That my joy, that is, your joy in me, may remain.* It is the will of Christ that his disciples should constantly and continually rejoice in him, Phil. iv. 4. The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment, but the joy of those who abide in Christ's love is a continual feast. The word of the Lord enduring for ever, the joys that flow from it, and are founded on it, do so too.

(2.) *That your joy might be full*; not only that you might be full of joy, but that your joy in me and in my love may rise higher and higher, till it come to perfection, when you *enter into the joy of your Lord.*" Note, [1.] Those and those only that have Christ's joy remaining in them have their joy full; worldly joys are empty, soon surfeit but never satisfy. It is only wisdom's joy that will fill the soul, Ps. xxxvi. 8. [2.] The design of Christ in his word is to *fill the joy* of his people; see 1 John i. 4. This and the other he hath said, that our joy might be fuller and fuller, and perfect at last.

3. To evidence their love to him by keeping his commandments: "*If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love,*" v. 16. This will be an evidence of the fidelity and constancy of your love to me, and then you may be sure of the continuance of my love to you." Observe here, (1.) The promise. "*You shall abide in my love*" as in a dwelling place, at home in Christ's love; as in a resting place, at ease in Christ's love; as in a strong-



hold, safe in it. *You shall abide in my love, you shall have grace and strength to persevere in loving me.*" If the same hand that first shed abroad the love of Christ in our hearts did not keep us in that love, we should not long abide in it, but, through the love of the world, should go out of love with Christ himself. (2.) The condition of the promise: *If you keep my commandments.* The disciples were to keep Christ's commandments, not only by a constant conformity to them themselves, but by a faithful delivery of them to others; they were to keep them as trustees, in whose hands that great *depositum* was lodged, for they were to *teach all things that Christ had commanded*, Matt. xxviii. 20. *This commandment they must keep without spot* (1 Tim. vi. 14), and thus they must show that they abide in his love.

To induce them to keep his commandments, he urges, [1.] His own example: *As I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.* Christ submitted to the law of mediation, and so preserved the honour and comfort of it, to teach us to submit to the laws of the Mediator, for we cannot otherwise preserve the honour and comfort of our relation to him. [2.] The necessity of it to their interest in him (v. 14): "*You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you and not otherwise.*" Note, *First*, Those only will be accounted Christ's faithful friends that approve themselves his obedient servants; for those that will not have him to reign over them shall be treated as his enemies. *Idem velle et idem nolle ea demum vera est amicitia*—Friendship involves a fellowship of aversions and attachments.—*Salust.* *Secondly*, It is universal obedience to Christ that is the only acceptable obedience; to obey him in every thing that he commands us, not excepting, much less *excepting against*, any command.

IV. Concerning the *disciples' love one to another*, enjoined as an evidence of their love to Christ, and a grateful return for his love to them. We must keep his commandments, and this is his commandment, that we *love one another*, v. 12, and again, v. 17. No one duty of religion is more frequently inculcated, nor more pathetically urged upon us, by our Lord Jesus, than that of mutual love, and for good reason. 1. It is here recommended by Christ's pattern (v. 12): *as I have loved you.* Christ's love to us should direct and engage our love to each other; in this manner, and from this motive, we should love one another, as, and because, Christ has loved us. He here specifies some of the expressions of his love to them; he called them friends, communicated his mind to them, was ready to give them what they asked. *Go you and do likewise.* 2. It is required by his precept. He interposes his authority, has made it one of the statute-laws of his kingdom. Observe how differently it is expressed in these two verses, and both very emphatic. (1.) *This*

*is my commandment* (v. 12), as if this were the most necessary of all the commandments. As under the law the prohibition of idolatry was the commandment more insisted on than any other, foreseeing the people's addictedness to that sin, so Christ, foreseeing the addictedness of the Christian church to uncharitableness, has laid most stress upon this precept. (2.) *These things I command you*, v. 17. He speaks as if he were about to give them many things in charge, and yet names this only, *that you love one another*; not only because this includes many duties, but because it will have a good influence upon all.

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated you.*

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also. 21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. 23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

Here Christ discourses concerning *hatred*, which is the character and genus of the devil's kingdom, as love is of the kingdom of Christ. Observe here,

I. Who they are in whom this hatred is found—the world, the children of this world, as distinguished from the children of God; those who are in the interests of the god of this world, whose image they bear, and whose power they are subject to; all those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who would not come into the church of Christ, which he audibly called, and visibly separates from this evil world. The calling of these *the world* intimates, 1. Their number; there were a world of people that opposed Christ and Christianity. Lord, how were they increased that troubled the Son of David! I fear, if we should put it to the vote between Christ and Satan, Satan

would out-poll us quite. 2. Their confederacy and combination; these numerous hosts are embodied, and are as one, Ps. lxxxiii. 5. Jews and Gentiles, that could agree in nothing else, agreed to persecute Christ's ministers. 3. Their spirit and disposition; they are *men of the world* (Ps. xvii. 13, 14), wholly devoted to this world and the things of it, and never thinking of another world. The people of God, though they are taught to hate the sins of sinners, yet not their persons, but to love and do good to all men. A malicious, spiteful, envious spirit, is not the spirit of Christ, but of the world.

II. Who they are against whom this hatred is levelled—against the disciples of Christ, against Christ himself, and against the Father.

1. The world hates the disciples of Christ: *The world hateth you* (v. 19); and he speaks of it as that which they must expect and count upon, v. 18, as 1 John iii. 13.

(1.) Observe how this comes in here. [1.] Christ had expressed the great kindness he had for them as friends; but, lest they should be puffed up with this, there was given them, as there was to Paul, a *thorn in the flesh*, that is, as it is explained there, reproaches and persecutions for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 10. [2.] He had appointed them their work, but tells them what hardships they should meet with in it, that it might not be a surprise to them, and that they might prepare accordingly. [3.] He had charged them to *love one another*, and need enough they had to love one another, for the world would hate them; to be kind to one another, for they would have a great deal of unkindness and ill-will from those that were without. "Keep peace among yourselves, and this will fortify you against the world's quarrels with you." Those that are in the midst of enemies are concerned to hold together.

(2.) Observe what is here included.

[1.] The world's enmity against the followers of Christ: it *hateth them*. Note, Whom Christ blesseth the world curseth. The favourites and heirs of heaven have never been the darlings of this world, since the old enmity was put between the seed of the woman and of the serpent. Why did Cain hate Abel, but *because his works were righteous*? Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing; Joseph's brethren hated him because his father loved him; Saul hated David because *the Lord was with him*; Ahab hated Micaiah because of his prophecies; such are the causeless causes of the world's hatred.

[2.] The fruits of that enmity, two of which we have here, v. 20. First, They will persecute you, because they hate you, for hatred is a restless passion. It is the common lot of those who will live godly in Christ Jesus to *suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. Christ foresaw what ill usage his ambassadors would meet with in the world, and yet, for the sake of those few that by their ministry were to be called out of the world, he sent

them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Secondly, Another fruit of their enmity is implied, that they would reject their doctrine. When Christ says, *If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours*, he means, They will keep yours, and regard yours, no more than they have regarded and kept mine. Note, The preachers of the gospel cannot but take the despising of their message to be the greatest injury that can be done to themselves; as it was a great affront to Jeremiah to say, *Let us not give heed to any of his words*, Jer. xviii. 18.

[3.] The causes of that enmity. The world will hate them,

First, Because they do not belong to it (v. 19): "*If you were of the world*, of its spirit, and in its interests, if you were carnal and worldly, *the world would love you* as its own; but, because you are called out of the world, it hates you, and ever will." Note, 1. We are not to wonder if those that are devoted to the world are caressed by it as its friends; most men *bless the covetous*, Ps. x. 3; xlix. 18. 2. Nor are we to wonder if those that are delivered from the world are malign'd by it as its enemies; when Israel is rescued out of Egypt, the Egyptians will pursue them. Observe, The reason why Christ's disciples are not of the world is not because they have by their own wisdom and virtue distinguished themselves from the world, but because Christ hath chosen them out of it, to set them apart for himself; and this is the reason why the world hates them; for, (1.) The glory which by virtue of this choice they are designed for sets them above the world, and so makes them the objects of its envy. The saints shall judge the world, and the upright have dominion, and therefore they are hated. (2.) The grace which by virtue of this choice they are endued with sets them against the world; they swim against the stream of the world, and are not conformed to it; they witness against it, and are not conformed to it. This would support them under all the calamities which the world's hatred would bring upon them, that they were hated because they were the choice and the chosen ones of the Lord Jesus, and were not of the world. Now, [1.] This was no just cause for the world's hatred of them. If we do any thing to make ourselves hateful, we have reason to lament it; but, if men hate us for that for which they should love and value us, we have reason to pity them, but no reason to perplex ourselves. Nay, [2.] This was just cause for their own joy. He that is hated because he is rich and prospers cares not who has the vexation of it, while he has the satisfaction of it.

—Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo  
Ipse domi—

—Let them hiss on, he cries;  
While in my own opinion fully blessed.

*Timon in Hor.*

Much more may those hug themselves whom the world hates, but whom Christ loves.



*Secondly*, "Another cause of the world's hating you will be because you do belong to Christ (v. 21): *For my name's sake.*" Here is the core of the controversy; whatever is pretended, this is the ground of the quarrel, they hate Christ's disciples because they *bear his name*, and *bear up his name* in the world. Note, 1. It is the character of Christ's disciples that they stand up for his name. The name into which they were baptized is that which they will live and die by. 2. It has commonly been the lot of those that appear for Christ's name to suffer for so doing, to suffer many things, and hard things, *all these things*. It is matter of comfort to the greatest sufferers if they suffer for Christ's name's sake. *If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you* (1 Pet. iv. 14), happy indeed, considering not only the honour that is imprinted upon those sufferings (Acts v. 41), but the comfort that is infused into them, and especially the crown of glory which those sufferings lead to. *If we suffer with Christ, and for Christ, we shall reign with him.*

*Thirdly*, After all, it is the world's ignorance that is the true cause of its enmity to the disciples of Christ (v. 21): *Because they know not him that sent me.* 1. They know not God. If men had but a due acquaintance with the very first principles of natural religion, and did but know God, though they did not embrace Christianity, yet they could not hate and persecute it. Those have no knowledge who eat up God's people, Ps. xiv. 4. 2. They know not God as he that sent our Lord Jesus, and authorized him to be the great Mediator of the peace. We do not rightly know God if we do not know him in Christ, and those who persecute those whom he sends make it to appear that they know not that he was sent of God. See 1 Cor. ii. 8.

2. The world hates Christ himself. And this is spoken of here for two ends:—

(1.) To mitigate the trouble of his followers, arising from the world's hatred, and to make it the less strange, and the less grievous (v. 18): *You know that it hated me before you, πῶτον ὑμῶν.* We read it as signifying priority of time; he began in the bitter cup of suffering, and then left us to pledge him; but it may be read as expressing his superiority over them: "*You know that it hated me, your first, your chief and captain, your leader and commander.*" [1.] If Christ, who excelled in goodness, and was perfectly innocent and universally beneficent, was hated, can we expect that any virtue or merit of ours should screen us from malice? [2.] If our Master, the founder of our religion, met with so much opposition in the planting of it, his servants and followers can look for no other in propagating and professing it. For this he refers them (v. 20) to his own word, at their admission into discipleship: *Remember the word that I said unto you.* It would help us to understand Christ's latter sayings to compare them with his former

sayings. Nor would any thing contribute more to the making of us easy than remembering the words of Christ, which will expound his providences. Now in this word there is, *First*, A plain truth: *The servant is not greater than his Lord.* This he had said to them, Matt. x. 24. Christ is our Lord, and therefore we must diligently attend all his motions, and patiently acquiesce in all his disposals, for the servant is inferior to his lord. The plainest truths are sometimes the strongest arguments for the hardest duties; Elihu answers a multitude of Job's murmurings with this one self-evident truth, that God is greater than man, Job xxxiii. 12. So here is, *Secondly*, A proper inference drawn from it: "*If they have persecuted me, as you have seen, and are likely to see much more, they will also persecute you; you may expect it and count upon it: for,*" 1. "You will do the same that I have done to provoke them; you will reprove them for their sins, and call them to repentance, and give them strict rules of holy living, which they will not bear." 2. "You cannot do more than I have done to oblige them; after so great an instance, let none wonder if they suffer ill for 'doing well.'" He adds, "*If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also;*" as there have been a few, and but a few, that have been wrought upon by my preaching, so there will be by yours a few, and but a few." Some give another sense of this, making *ἐτήρησαν* to be put for *παρητήρησαν*. "If they have lain in wait for my sayings, with a design to ensnare me, they will in like manner lie in wait to entangle you in your talk."

(2.) To aggravate the wickedness of this unbelieving world, and to discover its exceeding sinfulness; to hate and persecute the apostles was bad enough, but in them to hate and persecute Christ himself was much worse. The world is generally in an ill name in scripture, and nothing can put it into a worse name than this, that it hated Jesus Christ. There is a world of people that are haters of Christ. Two things he insists upon to aggravate the wickedness of those that hated him:—

[1.] That there was the greatest reason imaginable why they should love him; men's good words and good works usually recommend them; now as to Christ,

*First*, His words were such as merited their love (v. 22): "*If I had not spoken unto them, to court their love, they had not had sin,*" their opposition had not amounted to a hatred of me, their sin had not been comparatively no sin. But now that I have said so much to them to recommend myself to their best affections they have no pretence, no excuse for their sin." Observe here, 1. The advantage which those have that enjoy the gospel; Christ in it comes and speaks to them; he spoke in person to the men of that generation, and is still speaking to us by our Bibles and ministers, and as one that has the most unquestionable authority over us, and affection for

us. Every word of his is pure, carries with it a commanding majesty, and yet a condescending tenderness, able, one would think, to charm the deafest adder. 2. The excuse which those have that enjoy not the gospel: "*If I had not spoken to them, if they had never heard of Christ and of salvation by him, they had not had sin.*" (1.) Not this kind of sin. They had not been chargeable with a contempt of Christ if he had not come and made a tender of his grace to them. As *sin is not imputed where there is no law*, so unbelief is not imputed where there is no gospel; and, where it is imputed, it is thus far the only damning sin, that, being a sin against the remedy, other sins would not damn if the guilt of them were not bound on with this. (2.) Not such a degree of sin. If they had not had the gospel among them, their other sins had not been so bad; for the *times of ignorance God winked at*, Luke xii. 47, 48. 3. The aggravated guilt which those lie under to whom Christ has *come and spoken in vain*, whom he has called and invited in vain, with whom he has reasoned and pleaded in vain; *They have no cloak for their sin*; they are altogether inexcusable, and in the judgment day will be speechless, and will not have a word to say for themselves. Note, The clearer and fuller the discoveries are which are made to us of the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, the more is said to us that is convincing and endearing, the greater is our sin if we do not love him and believe in him. The word of Christ strips sin of its cloak, that it may appear sin.

*Secondly*, His works were such as merited their love, as well as his words (v. 24): "*If I had not done among them, in their country, and before their eyes, such works as no other man ever did, they had not had sin*; their unbelief and enmity had been excusable, and they might have had some colour to say that my word was not to be credited, if not otherwise confirmed;" but he produced satisfactory proofs of his divine mission, *works which no other man did*. Note, 1. As the Creator demonstrates his power and Godhead by his works (Rom. i. 20), so doth the Redeemer. His miracles, his mercies, works of wonder and works of grace, prove him sent of God, and sent on a kind errand. 2. Christ's works were such as *no man ever did*. No common person that had not a commission from heaven, and God with him, could work miracles, ch. iii. 2. And no prophet ever wrought such miracles, so many, so illustrious. Moses and Elias wrought miracles as servants, by a derived power; but Christ, as a Son, by his own power. This was it that amazed the people, that with authority he commanded diseases and devils (Mark i. 27); they owned they never saw the like, Mark ii. 12. They were all good works; works of mercy; and this seems especially intended here, for he is upbraiding them with this, that they hated him. One that

was so universally useful, more than ever any man was, one would think, should have been universally beloved, and yet even he is hated. 3. The works of Christ enhance the guilt of sinners' infidelity and enmity to him, to the last degree of wickedness and absurdity. If they had only heard his words, and not seen his works,—if we had only his sermons upon record, and not his miracles, unbelief might have pleaded want of proof; but now it has no excuse. Nay, the rejecting of Christ, both by them and us, has in it the sin, not only of obstinate unbelief, but of base ingratitude. They saw Christ to be most amiable, and studious to do them a kindness; yet they hated him, and studied to do him mischief. And we see in his word that great love wherewith he loved us, and yet are not wrought upon by it.

[2.] That there was no reason at all why they should hate him. Some that at one time will say and do that which is recommending, yet at another time will say and do that which is provoking and disobliging; but our Lord Jesus not only did much to merit men's esteem and good-will, but never did any thing justly to incur their displeasure; this he pleads by quoting a scripture for it (v. 25): "*This comes to pass, this unreasonable hatred of me, and of my disciples for my sake, that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law*" (that is, in the Old Testament, which is a law, and was received by them as a law), "*They hated me without a cause*;" this David speaks of himself as a type of Christ, Ps. xxxv. 19; lxix. 4. Note, *First*, Those that hate Christ hate him without any just cause; enmity to Christ is unreasonable enmity. We think those deserve to be hated that are haughty and froward, but Christ is meek and lowly, compassionate and tender; those also that under colour of complaisance are malicious, envious, and revengeful, but Christ devoted himself to the service of those that used him, nay, and of those that abused him; toiled for others' ease, and impoverished himself to enrich us. Those we think hateful that are *hurtful to kings and provinces*, and disturbers of the public peace; but Christ, on the contrary, was the greatest blessing imaginable to his country, and yet was hated. He testified indeed that *their works were evil*, with a design to make them good, but to hate him for this cause was to hate him without cause. *Secondly*, Herein the scripture was fulfilled, and the antitype answered the type. Saul and his courtiers hated David without cause, for he had been serviceable to him with his harp, and with his sword; Absalom and his party hated him, though to him he had been an indulgent father, and to them a great benefactor. Thus was the Son of David hated, and hunted most unjustly. Those that hated Christ did not design there in to fulfil the scripture; but God, in permitting it, had that in his eye; and it confirms our faith in



Christ as the Messiah that even this was foretold concerning him, and, being foretold, was accomplished in him. And we must not think it strange or hard if it have a further accomplishment in us. We are apt to justify our complaints of injuries done us with this, that they are causeless, whereas the more they are so the more they are like the sufferings of Christ, and may be the more easily borne.

3. In Christ the world hates God himself; this is twice said here (v. 23): *He that hateth me, though he thinks his hatred goes no further, yet really he hates my Father also.* And again, v. 24, *They have seen and hated both me and my Father.* Note, (1.) There are those that hate God, notwithstanding the beauty of his nature and the bounty of his providence; they are enraged at his justice, as the devils that believe it and tremble, are vexed at his dominion, and would gladly *break his bands asunder.* Those who cannot bring themselves to deny that there is a God, and yet wish there were none, they see and hate him. (2.) Hatred of Christ will be construed and adjudged hatred of God, for he is in his person his Father's express image, and in his office his great agent and ambassador. God will have all men to honour the Son as they honour the Father, and therefore what entertainment the Son has, that the Father has. Hence it is easy to infer that those who are enemies to the Christian religion, however they may cry up natural religion, are really enemies to all religion. Deists are in effect atheists, and those that ridicule the light of the gospel would, if they could, extinguish even natural light, and shake off all obligations of conscience and the fear of God. Let an unbelieving malignant world know that their enmity to the gospel of Christ will be looked upon in the great day as an enmity to the blessed God himself; and let all that suffer for righteousness' sake, according to the will of God, take comfort from this; if God himself be hated in them, and struck at through him, they need not be either ashamed of their cause or afraid of the issue.

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:* 27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

Christ having spoken of the great opposition which his gospel was likely to meet with in the world, and the hardships that would be put upon the preachers of it, lest any should fear that they and it would be run down by that violent torrent, he here intimates to all those that were well-wishers to his cause and interest what effectual provision was made for supporting it, both by the principal testimony of the Spirit (v. 26), and the

subordinate testimony of the apostles (v. 27), and testimonies are the proper supports of truth.

I. It is here promised that the blessed Spirit shall maintain the cause of Christ in the world, notwithstanding the opposition it should meet with. Christ, when he was reviled, committed his injured cause to his Father, and did not lose by his silence, for the Comforter came, pleaded it powerfully, and carried it triumphantly. "*When the Comforter or Advocate is come, who proceedeth from the Father, and whom I will send to supply the want of my bodily presence, he shall testify of me against those that hate me without cause.*" We have more in this verse concerning the Holy Ghost than in any one verse besides in the Bible; and, being baptized into his name, we are concerned to acquaint ourselves with him as far as he is revealed.

1. Here is an account of him in his essence, or subsistence rather. He is *the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father.* Here, (1.) He is spoken of as a distinct person; not a quality or property, but a person under the proper name of a *Spirit*, and proper title of the *Spirit of truth*, a title fitly given him where he is brought in testifying. (2.) As a divine person, that *proceedeth from the Father*, by out-goings that were of old, *from everlasting.* The spirit or breath of man, called the *breath of life*, proceeds from the man, and by it modified he delivers his mind, by it invigorated he sometimes exerts his strength to *blow out* what he would extinguish, and *blow up* what he would excite. Thus the blessed Spirit is the emanation of divine light, and the energy of divine power. The rays of the sun, by which it dispenses and diffuses its light, heat, and influence, proceed from the sun, and yet are one with it. The Nicene Creed says, *The Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son*, for he is called the *Spirit of the Son*, Gal. iv. 6. And the Son is here said to *send him.* The Greek church choose rather to say, *from the Father by the Son.*

2. In his mission. (1.) He will come in a more plentiful effusion of his gifts, graces, and powers, than had ever yet been. Christ had been long the *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*—*he that should come*; now the blessed Spirit is so. (2.) *I will send him to you from the Father.* He had said (ch. xiv. 16), *I will pray the Father, and he shall send you the Comforter*, which bespeaks the Spirit to be the fruit of the intercession Christ makes within the veil: here he says, *I will send him*, which bespeaks him to be the fruit of his dominion within the veil. The Spirit was sent, [1.] By Christ as Mediator, now *ascended on high to give gifts unto men*, and all power being given to him. [2.] From the Father: "Not only from heaven, my Father's house" (the Spirit was given in a *sound from heaven*, Acts ii. 2), "but according to my Father's will and appointment; and with his concurring power

and authority." [3.] To the apostles to instruct them in their preaching, enable them for working, and carry them through their sufferings. He was given to them and their successors, both in Christianity and in the ministry; to them and their seed, and their seed's seed, according to that promise, Isa. lix. 21.

3. In his office and operations, which are two:—(1.) One implied in the title given to him; he is the *Comforter*, or *Advocate*. An advocate for Christ, to maintain his cause against the world's infidelity, a comforter to the saints against the world's hatred. (2.) Another expressed: *He shall testify of me*. He is not only an advocate, but a witness for Jesus Christ; he is one of the three that *bear record in heaven*, and the first of the three that *bear witness on earth*, 1 John v. 7, 8. He instructed the apostles, and enabled them to work miracles; he indited the scriptures, which are the standing witnesses that *testify of Christ*, ch. v. 39. The power of the ministry is derived from the Spirit, for he qualifies ministers; and the power of Christianity too, for he sanctifies Christians, and in both testifies of Christ.

II. It is here promised that the apostles also, by the Spirit's assistance, should have the honour of being Christ's witnesses (v. 27): *And you also shall bear witness of me*, being competent witnesses, for *you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry*. Observe here,

1. That the apostles were appointed to be witnesses for Christ in the world. When he had said, *The Spirit shall testify*, he adds, *And you also shall bear witness*. Note, The Spirit's working is not to supersede, but to engage and encourage ours. Though the Spirit testify, ministers also must bear their testimony, and people attend to it; for the Spirit of grace witnesses and works by the means of grace. The apostles were the first witnesses that were called in the famous trial between Christ and the prince of this world, which issued in the ejection of the intruder. This intimates, (1.) The work cut out for them; they were to attest the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, concerning Christ, for the recovering of his just right, and the maintaining of his crown and dignity. Though Christ's disciples fled when they should have been witnesses for him upon his trial before the high priest and Pilate, yet after the Spirit was poured out upon them they appeared courageous in vindication of the cause of Christ against the accusations it was loaded with. The truth of the Christian religion was to be proved very much by the evidence of matter of fact, especially Christ's resurrection, of which the apostles were in a particular manner chosen witnesses (Acts x. 41), and they bore their testimony accordingly, Acts iii. 15; v. 32. Christ's ministers are his witnesses. (2.) The honour put upon them hereby—that

they should be *workers together with God*. "The Spirit shall testify of me, and you also, under the conduct of the Spirit, and in concurrence with the Spirit (who will preserve you from mistaking in that which you relate on your own knowledge, and will inform you of that which you cannot know but by revelation), *shall bear witness*." This might encourage them against the hatred and contempt of the world, that Christ had honoured them, and would own them.

2. That they were qualified to be so: *You have been with me from the beginning*. They not only heard his public sermons, but had constant private converse with him. He *went about doing good*, and, while others saw the wonderful and merciful works that he did in their own town and country only, those that went about with him were witnesses of them all. They had likewise opportunity of observing the unspotted purity of his conversation, and could witness for him that they never saw in him, nor heard from him, any thing that had the least tincture of human frailty. Note. (1.) We have great reason to receive the record which the apostles gave of Christ, for they did not speak by hearsay, but what they had the greatest assurance of imaginable, 2 Pet. i. 16; 1 John i. 1, 3. (2.) Those are best able to bear witness for Christ that have themselves been with him, by faith, hope, and love, and by living a life of communion with God in him. Ministers must first learn Christ, and then preach him. Those speak best of the things of God that speak experimentally. It is particularly a great advantage to have been acquainted with Christ *from the beginning*, to understand all things from the *very first*, Luke i. 3. To have been with him from the beginning of our days. An early acquaintance and constant converse with the gospel of Christ will make a man like a good householder.

## CHAP. XVI.

Among other glorious things God hath spoken of himself this is one, I wound, and I heal, Deut. 32, 39. Christ's discourse in this chapter, which continues and concludes his farewell sermon to his disciples, does so. 1. Here are wounding words in the notice he gives them of the troubles that were before them, ver. 1—6. II. Here are healing words in the comforts that ministers to them for their support under those troubles, ver. 7—15. 1. That he would send them the Comforter, ver. 7—15. 2. That he would visit them again at his resurrection, ver. 16—22. 3. That he would secure to them an answer of peace to all their prayers, ver. 23—27. 4. That he was now but returning to his Father, ver. 28—32. 5. That, whatever troubles they might meet with in this world, by virtue of his victory over it they should be sure of peace in him, ver. 33.

THESE things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. 2 They shall put you out of the synagogue: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. 3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But these things have I told you, that when the time



shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. 5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? 6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

Christ dealt faithfully with his disciples when he sent them forth on his errands, for he told them the worst of it, that they might sit down and count the cost. He had told them in the chapter before to expect the world's hatred; now here in these verses,

I. He gives them a reason why he alarmed them thus with the expectation of trouble: *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended, or scandalized, v. 1.*

1. The disciples of Christ are apt to be offended at the cross; and the offence of the cross is a dangerous temptation, even to good men, to turn back from the ways of God, or turn aside out of them, or drive on heavily in them; to quit either their integrity or their comfort. It is not for nothing that a suffering time is called *an hour of temptation*. 2. Our Lord Jesus, by giving us notice of trouble, designed to take off the terror of it, that it might not be a surprise to us. Of all the adversaries of our peace, in this world of troubles, none insult us more violently, nor put our troops more into disorder, than disappointment does; but we can easily welcome a guest we expect, and *being forewarned are fore-armed*—*Præmoniti, præmuniti*.

II. He foretels particularly what they should suffer (v. 2): "Those that have power to do it shall put you out of their synagogues; and this is not the worst, they shall kill you." *Ecce duo gladii—Behold two swords drawn against the followers of the Lord Jesus.*

1. The sword of ecclesiastical censure; this is drawn against them by the Jews, for they were the only pretenders to church-power. They shall cast you out of their synagogues; ἀποσυναγώγους ποιήσουσιν ὑμᾶς—they shall make you excommunicates. (1.) "They shall cast you out of the particular synagogues you were members of." At first, they scourged them in their synagogues as contemners of the law (Matt. x. 17), and at length cast them out as incorrigible. (2.) "They shall cast you out of the congregation of Israel in general, the national church of the Jews; shall debar you from the privileges of that, put you into the condition of an outlaw," *qui caput gerit lupinum—to be knocked on the head, like another wolf*; "they will look upon you as Samaritans, as heathen men and publicans." *Interdico tibi aqua et igne—I forbid you the use of water and fire.* And were it not for the penalties, forfeitures, and incapacities, incurred hereby, it would be no injury

to be thus driven out of a house infected and falling. Note, It has often been the lot of Christ's disciples to be unjustly excommunicated. Many a good truth has been branded with an anathema, and many a child of God delivered to Satan.

2. The sword of civil power: "The time cometh, the hour is come; now things are likely to be worse with you than hitherto they have been; when you are expelled as heretics, they will kill you, and think they do God service, and others will think so too." (1.) You will find them really cruel: They will kill you. Christ's sheep have been accounted as sheep for the slaughter; the twelve apostles (we are told) were all put to death, except John. Christ had said (ch. 15, 27), You shall bear witness, μαρτυρεῖτε—you shall be martyrs, shall seal the truth with your blood, your heart's blood. (2.) You will find them seemingly conscientious; they will think they do God service; they will seem λατρεῖαν προσφέρειν—to offer a good sacrifice to God; as those that cast out God's servants of old, and said, *Let the Lord be glorified*, Isa. lxvi. 5. Note, [1.] It is possible for those that are real enemies to God's service to pretend a mighty zeal for it. The devil's work has many a time been done in God's livery, and one of the most mischievous enemies Christianity ever had sits in the temple of God. Nay, [2.] It is common to patronise an enmity to religion with a colour of duty to God, and service to his church. God's people have suffered the greatest hardships from conscientious persecutors. Paul verily thought he ought to do what he did against the name of Jesus. This does not at all lessen the sin of the persecutors, for villanies will never be consecrated by putting the name of God to them; but it does enhance the sufferings of the persecuted, to die under the character of being enemies to God; but there will be a resurrection of names as well as of bodies at the great day.

III. He gives them the true reason of the world's enmity and rage against them (v. 3): "These things will they do unto you, not because you have done them any harm, but because they have not known the Father, nor me. Let this comfort you, that none will be your enemies but the worst of men." Note, 1. Many that pretend to know God are wretchedly ignorant of him. Those that pretended to do him service thought they knew him, but it was a wrong notion they had of him. Israel transgressed the covenant, and yet cried, *My God, we know thee*, Hos. viii. 1, 2. 2. Those that are ignorant of Christ cannot have any right knowledge of God. In vain do men pretend to know God and religion, while they slight Christ and Christianity. 3. Those are very ignorant indeed of God and Christ that think it an acceptable piece of service to persecute good people. Those that know Christ know that he came not into the world to destroy men's lives, but to

save them; that is, rules by the power of truth and love, not of fire and sword. Never was such a persecuting church as that which makes *ignorance the mother of devotion*.

IV. He tells them why he gave them notice of this now, and why not sooner.

1. Why he told them of it now (v. 4), not to discourage them, or add to their present sorrow; nor did he tell them of their danger that they might contrive how to avoid it, but that, "when *the time shall come* (and you may be sure it will come), you may *remember that I told you*." Note, When suffering times come it will be of use to us to remember what Christ has told us of sufferings. (1.) That our belief of Christ's foresight and faithfulness may be confirmed; and, (2.) That the trouble may be the less grievous, for we were told of it before, and we took up our profession in expectation of it, so that it ought not to be a surprise to us, nor looked upon as a wrong to us. As Christ in his sufferings, so his followers in theirs, should have an eye to the *fulfilling of the scripture*.

2. Why he did not tell them of it sooner: "*I spoke not this to you from the beginning*" when you and I came to be first acquainted, because *I was with you*. (1.) While he was with them, he bore the shock of the world's malice, and stood in the front of the battle; against him the powers of darkness levelled all their force, not against *small or great*, but only against the *king of Israel*, and therefore he did not need then to say so much to them of suffering, because it did not fall much to their share; but we do find that from the beginning he bade them prepare for sufferings; and therefore, (2.) It seems rather to be meant of the promise of *another comforter*. This he had said little of to them *at the beginning*, because he was himself with them to instruct, guide, and comfort them, and then they needed not the promise of the Spirit's extraordinary presence. The children of the bride-chamber would not have so much need of a comforter till the bridegroom should be *taken away*.

V. He expresses a very affectionate concern for the present sadness of his disciples, upon occasion of what he had said to them (v. 5, 6): "*Now I am to be no longer with you, but go my way to him that sent me, to repose there, after this fatigue; and none of you asketh me, with any courage, Whither goest thou?*" But, instead of enquiring after that which would comfort you, you pore upon that which looks melancholy, and *sorrow has filled your heart*."

1. He had told them that he was about to leave them: *Now I go my way*. He was not driven away by force, but voluntarily departed; his life was not extorted from him, but deposited by him. He went to *him that sent him*, to give an account of his negotiation. Thus, when we depart out of this world, we go to *him that sent us* into it, which should make us all solicitous to live to good purposes,

remembering we have a commission to execute, which must be returned at a certain day.

2. He had told them what hard things they must suffer when he was gone, and that they must not expect such an easy quiet life as they had had. Now, if these were the legacies he had to leave to them, who had *left all* for him, they would be tempted to think they had made a sorry bargain of it, and were, for the present, in a consternation about it, in which their Master sympathizes with them, yet blames them, (1.) That they were careless of the means of comfort, and did not stir up themselves to seek it: *None of you asks me, Whither goest thou?* Peter had started this question (ch. xiii. 36), and Thomas had seconded it (ch. xiv. 5), but they did not pursue it, they did not take the answer; they were in the dark concerning it, and did not enquire further, nor seek for fuller satisfaction; they did not continue seeking, continue knocking. See what a compassionate teacher Christ is, and how condescending to the weak and ignorant. Many a teacher will not endure that the learner should ask the same question twice; if he cannot take a thing quickly, let him go without it; but our Lord Jesus knows how to deal with babes, that must be taught with *precept upon precept*. If the disciples here would have pushed on that enquiry, they would have found that his going away was for his advancement, and therefore his departure from them should not inordinately trouble them (for why should they be against his preferment?) and for their advantage, and therefore their sufferings for him should not inordinately trouble them; for a sight of *Jesus at the right hand of God* would be an effectual support to them, as it was to Stephen. Note, A humble believing enquiry into the design and tendency of the darkest dispensations of Providence would help to reconcile us to them, and to grieve the less, and fear the less, because of them; it will silence us to ask, Whence come they? but will abundantly satisfy us to ask, Whither go they? for we know they *work for good*, Rom. viii. 28.

(2.) That they were too intent, and pored too much, upon the occasions of their grief: *Sorrow has filled their hearts*. Christ had said enough to fill them with joy (ch. xv. 11); but by looking at that only which made against them, and overlooking that which made for them, they were so full of sorrow that there was no room left for joy. Note, It is the common fault and folly of melancholy Christians to dwell only upon the dark side of the cloud, to meditate nothing but terror, and turn a deaf ear to the *voice of joy and gladness*. That which filled the disciples' hearts with sorrow, and hindered the operation of the cordials Christ administered, was too great an affection to this present life. They were big with hopes of their Master's external kingdom and glory, and that they should shine and reign with him: and now, instead of that, to hear of nothing but *torments*



and afflictions, this filled them with sorrow. Nothing is a greater prejudice to our joy in God than *the love of the world*; and the *sorrow of the world*, the consequence of it.

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. 12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show *it* unto you.

As it was usual with the Old-Testament prophets to comfort the church in its calamities with the promise of the Messiah (Isa. ix. 6; Mic. v. 6; Zech. iii. 8); so, the Messiah being come, the promise of the Spirit was the great cordial, and is still.

Three things we have here concerning the Comforter's coming:—

I. That Christ's departure was absolutely necessary to the Comforter's coming, *v. 7*. The disciples were so loth to believe this that Christ saw cause to assert it with a more than ordinary solemnity: *I tell you the truth*. We may be confident of the truth of every thing that Christ has told us; he has no design to impose upon us. Now, to make them easy, he here tells them,

1. In general, *It was expedient for them that he should go away*. This was strange doctrine, but if it was true it was comfortable enough, and showed them how absurd their sorrow was. *It is expedient*, not only for me, but for you also, *that I go away*; though they do not see it, and are loth to believe it, so it is. Note, (1.) Those things often seem grievous to us that are really expedient for us; and particularly our going away when we have finished our course. (2.) Our Lord Jesus is always for that which is most expedient for us, whether we think so or no. He deals not with us according to the folly

of our own choice, but graciously over-rules it, and gives us the physic we are loth to take, because he knows it is good for us.

2. *It was therefore expedient* because it was in order to the sending of the Spirit. Now observe,

(1.) That Christ's going was in order to the Comforter's coming.

[1.] This is expressed negatively: *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come*. And why not? *First*, So it was settled in the divine counsels concerning this affair, and the measure must not be altered; *shall the earth be forsaken for them*? He that gives freely may recal one gift before he bestows another while we would fondly hold all. *Secondly*, It is congruous enough that the ambassador extraordinary should be recalled, before the envoy come, that is constantly to reside. *Thirdly*, The sending of the Spirit was to be the fruit of Christ's purchase, and that purchase was to be made by his death, which was his going away. *Fourthly*, It was to be an answer to his intercession within the veil. See *ch. xiv. 16*. Thus must this gift be both paid for, and prayed for, by our Lord Jesus, that we might learn to put the greater value upon it. *Fifthly*, The great argument the Spirit was to use in convincing the world must be Christ's ascension into heaven, and his welcome there. See *v. 10*, and *ch. vii. 39*. *Lastly*, The disciples must be weaned from his bodily presence, which they were too apt to dote upon, before they were duly prepared to receive the spiritual aids and comforts of a new dispensation.

[2.] It is expressed positively: *If I depart I will send him to you*; as though he had said, "Trust me to provide effectually that you shall be no loser by my departure." The glorified Redeemer is not unmindful of his church on earth, nor will ever leave it without its necessary supports. Though he *departs, he sends the Comforter*; nay, he *departs on purpose to send him*. Thus still, though one generation of ministers and Christians depart, another is raised up in their room, for Christ will maintain his own cause.

(2.) That the presence of Christ's Spirit in his church is so much better, and more desirable, than his bodily presence, that it was really expedient for us that he should go away, to send the Comforter. His corporal presence could be but in one place at one time, but his Spirit is every where, in all places, at all times, wherever *two or three are gathered in his name*. Christ's bodily presence draws men's eyes, his Spirit draws their hearts; that was *the letter which kills, his Spirit gives life*.

II. That the coming of the Spirit was absolutely necessary to the carrying on of Christ's interests on earth (*v. 8*): *And when he is come, ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος*. He that is sent is willing of himself to come, and at his first coming he will do this, *he will reprove, or, as the margin reads it, he will convince the world*, by your ministry,



concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

1. See here what the office of the Spirit is, and on what errand he is sent. (1.) To *reprove*. The Spirit, by the word and conscience, is a reprover; ministers are reprovers by office, and by them the Spirit reproveth. (2.) To *convince*. It is a law-term, and speaks the office of the judge in summing up the evidence, and setting a matter that has been long canvassed in a clear and true light. He shall *convince*, that is, "He shall put to silence the adversaries of Christ and his cause, by discovering and demonstrating the falsehood and fallacy of that which they have maintained, and the truth and certainty of that which they have opposed." Note, Convincing work is the Spirit's work; he can do it effectually, and none but he; man may open the cause, but it is the Spirit only that can open the heart. The Spirit is called the *Comforter* (v. 7), and here it is said, *He shall convince*. One would think this were cold comfort, but it is the method the Spirit takes, first to convince, and then to comfort; first to lay open the wound, and then to apply healing medicines. Or, taking conviction more generally, for a demonstration of what is right, it intimates that the Spirit's comforts are solid, and grounded upon truth.

2. See who they are whom he is to reprove and convince: *The world*, both Jew and Gentile. (1.) He shall give the world the most powerful means of conviction, for the apostles shall go into all the world, backed by the Spirit, to preach the gospel, fully proved. (2.) He shall sufficiently provide for the taking off and silencing of the objections and prejudices of the world against the gospel. Many an infidel was *convinced of all, and judged of all*, 1 Cor. xiv. 24. (3.) He shall effectually and savingly convince many in the world, some in every age, in every place, in order to their conversion to the faith of Christ. Now this was an encouragement to the disciples, in reference to the difficulties they were likely to meet with, [1.] That they should see good done, Satan's kingdom *fall like lightning*, which would be their joy, as it was his. Even this malignant world the Spirit shall work upon; and the conviction of sinners is the comfort of faithful ministers. [2.] That this would be the fruit of their services and sufferings, these should contribute very much to this good work.

3. See what the Spirit shall convince the world of.

(1.) *Of sin* (v. 9), *because they believe not on me*. [1.] The Spirit is sent to convince sinners of sin, not barely to tell them of it; in conviction there is more than this; it is to prove it upon them, and force them to own it, as they (ch. viii. 9) that were *convicted of their own consciences*. *Make them to know their abominations*. The Spirit convinces of the fact of sin, that we have done so and so; of the fault of sin, that we have done ill in

doing so; of the folly of sin, that we have acted against right reason, and our true interest; of the filth of sin, that by it we are become odious to God; of the fountain of sin, the corrupt nature; and, lastly, of the fruit of sin, that the end thereof is death. The Spirit demonstrates the depravity and degeneracy of the whole world, that all the world is guilty before God. [2.] The Spirit, in conviction, fastens especially upon the sin of unbelief, their not believing in Christ, *First*, As the great reigning sin. There was, and is, a world of people, that believe not in Jesus Christ, and they are not sensible that it is their sin. Natural conscience tells them that murder and theft are sin; but it is a supernatural work of the Spirit to convince them that it is a sin to suspend their belief of the gospel, and to reject the salvation offered by it. Natural religion, after it has given us its best discoveries and directions, lays and leaves us under this further obligation, that whatever divine revelation shall be made to us at any time, with sufficient evidence to prove it divine, we accept it, and submit to it. This law those transgress who, when *God speaketh to us by his Son, refuse him that speaketh*; and therefore it is sin. *Secondly*, As the great ruining sin. Every sin is so in its own nature; no sin is so to them that believe in Christ; so that it is unbelief that damns sinners. It is because of this that they cannot *enter into rest*, that they cannot *escape the wrath of God*; it is a sin against the remedy. *Thirdly*, As that which is at the bottom of all sin; so Calvin takes it. The Spirit shall convince the world that the true reason why sin reigns among them is because they are not by faith united to Christ. *Ne putimus vel guttam unam rectitudinis sine Christo nobis inesse—Let us not suppose that, apart from Christ, we have a drop of rectitude.*—Calvin.

(2.) *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and you see me no more*, v. 10. We may understand this, [1.] Of Christ's personal righteousness. He shall convince the world that Jesus of Nazareth was Christ the righteous (1 John ii. 1), as the centurion owned (Luke xxiii. 47), *Certainly this was a righteous man*. His enemies put him under the worst of characters, and multitudes were not or would not be convinced but that he was a bad man, which strengthened their prejudices against his doctrine; but he is *justified by the Spirit* (1 Tim. iii. 16), he is proved to be a *righteous man*, and not a deceiver; and then the point is in effect gained; for he is either the great Redeemer or a great cheat; but a cheat we are sure he is not. Now by what medium or argument will the Spirit convince men of the sincerity of the Lord Jesus? Why, *First*, Their seeing him no more will contribute something towards the removal of their prejudices; they shall see him no more in the *likeness of sinful flesh, in the form of a servant*, which made



them slight him. Moses was more respected after his removal than before. But, *Secondly*, His going to the Father would be a full conviction of it. The coming of the Spirit, according to the promise, was a proof of Christ's exaltation to God's *right hand* (Acts ii. 33), and this was a demonstration of his righteousness; for the holy God would never set a deceiver at his right hand. [2.] Of Christ's righteousness communicated to us for our justification and salvation; that everlasting righteousness which Messiah was to bring in, Dan. ix. 24. Now, *First*, The Spirit shall convince men of this righteousness. Having by convictions of sin shown them their need of a righteousness, lest this should drive them to despair he will show them where it is to be had, and how they may, upon their believing, be acquitted from guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's sight. It was hard to convince those of this righteousness that went about to establish their own (Rom. x. 3), but the Spirit will do it. *Secondly*, Christ's ascension is the great argument proper to convince men of this righteousness: *I go to the Father, and, as an evidence of my welcome with him, you shall see me no more.* If Christ had left any part of his undertaking unfinished, he had been sent back again; but now that we are sure he is at the right hand of God we are sure of being justified through him.

(3.) *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged, v. 11.* Observe here, [1.] The devil, the prince of this world, was judged, was discovered to be a great deceiver and destroyer, and as such judgment was entered against him, and execution in part done. He was cast out of the Gentile world when his oracles were silenced and his altars deserted, cast out of the bodies of many in Christ's name, which miraculous power continued long in the church; he was cast out of the souls of people by the grace of God working with the gospel of Christ; he fell as lightning from heaven. [2.] This is a good argument wherewith the Spirit convinces the world of judgment, that is, *First*, Of inherent holiness and sanctification, Matt. xii. 18. By the judgment of the prince of this world, it appears that Christ is stronger than Satan, and can disarm and dispossess him, and set up his throne upon the ruins of his. *Secondly*, Of a new and better dispensation of things. He shall show that Christ's errand into the world was to set things to right in it, and to introduce times of reformation and regeneration; and he proves it by this, that the prince of this world, the great master of misrule, is judged and expelled. All will be well when his power is broken who made all the mischief. *Thirdly*, Of the power and dominion of the Lord Jesus. He shall convince the world that all judgment is committed to him, and that he is the Lord of all, which is evident by this, that he has judged the prince of this world, has broken the serpent's head, destroyed him

that had the power of death, and spoiled principalities; if Satan be thus subdued by Christ, we may be sure no other power can stand before him. *Fourthly*, Of the final day of judgment: all the obstinate enemies of Christ's gospel and kingdom shall certainly be reckoned with at last, for the devil, their ringleader, is judged.

III. That the coming of the Spirit would be of unspeakable advantage to the disciples themselves. The Spirit has work to do, not only on the enemies of Christ, to convince and humble them, but upon his servants and agents, to instruct and comfort them; and therefore it was expedient for them that he should go away.

1. He intimates to them the tender sense he had of their present weakness (v. 12): *I have yet many things to say unto you* (not which should have been said, but which he could and would have said), *but you cannot bear them now*. See what a teacher Christ is. (1.) None like him for copiousness; when he has said much, he has still many things more to say; treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him; we are not straitened in him, if we be not straitened in ourselves. (2.) None like him for compassion; he would have told them more of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, particularly of the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, but they could not bear it, it would have confounded and stumbled them, rather than have given them any satisfaction. When, after his resurrection, they spoke to him of restoring the kingdom to Israel, he referred them to the coming of the Holy Ghost, by which they should receive power to bear those discoveries which were so contrary to the notions they had received that they could not bear them now.

2. He assures them of sufficient assistances, by the pouring out of the Spirit. They were now conscious to themselves of great dulness, and many mistakes; and what shall they do now their Master is leaving them? "*But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, you will be easy, and all will be well.*" Well indeed; for he shall undertake to guide the apostles, and glorify Christ.

(1.) To guide the apostles. He will take care, [1.] That they do not miss their way: *He will guide you*; as the camp of Israel was guided through the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire. The Spirit guided their tongues in speaking, and their pens in writing, to secure them from mistakes. The Spirit is given us to be our guide (Rom. viii. 14), not only to show us the way, but to go along with us, by his continued aids and influences.

[2.] That they do not come short of their end: *He will guide them into all truth*, as the skilful pilot guides the ship into the port it is bound for. To be led into a truth is more than barely to know it; it is to be intimately and experimentally acquainted with

it; to be piously and strongly affected with it; not only to have the notion of it in our heads, but the relish and savour and power of it in our hearts; it denotes a gradual discovery of truth shining more and more: "He shall lead you by those truths that are plain and easy to those that are more difficult." But how into *all truth*? The meaning is,

*First*, Into the whole truth relating to their embassy; whatever was needful or useful for them to know, in order to the due discharge of their office, they should be fully instructed in it; what truths they were to teach others the Spirit would teach them, would give them the understanding of, and enable them both to explain and to defend.

*Secondly*, Into nothing but the truth. All that *he shall guide you into shall be truth* (1 John ii. 27); *the anointing is truth*. In the following words he proves both these:—1. "The Spirit shall teach nothing but the truth, *for he shall not speak of himself any doctrine distinct from mine, but whatsoever he shall hear, and knows to be the mind of the Father, that, and that only, shall he speak.*" This intimates, (1.) That the testimony of the Spirit, in the word and by the apostles, is what we may rely upon. The Spirit knows and searches all things, even the deep things of God, and the apostles received that Spirit (1 Cor. ii. 10, 11), so that we may venture our souls upon the Spirit's word. (2.) That the testimony of the Spirit always concurs with the word of Christ, *for he does not speak of himself*, has no separate interest or intention of his own, but, as in essence so in records, he is one with the Father and the Son, 1 John v. 7. Men's word and spirit often disagree, but the eternal Word and the eternal Spirit never do. 2. "He shall teach you all truth, and keep back nothing that is profitable for you, *for he will show you things to come.*" The Spirit was in the apostles a Spirit of prophecy; it was foretold that he should be so (Joel ii. 28), and he was so. *The Spirit showed them things to come*, as Acts xi. 28; xx. 23; xxi. 11. The Spirit spoke of the apostasy of the latter times, 1 Tim. iv. 1. John, when he was in the Spirit, had things to come shown him in vision. Now this was a great satisfaction to their own minds, and of use to them in their conduct, and was also a great confirmation of their mission. Jansenius has a pious note upon this: We should not grudge that the Spirit does not now show us things to come in this world, as he did to the apostles; let it suffice that the Spirit in the word hath shown us things to come in the other world, which are our chief concern.

(2.) The Spirit undertook to glorify Christ, v. 14, 15. [1.] Even the sending of the Spirit was the glorifying of Christ. God the Father glorified him in heaven, and the Spirit glorified him on earth. It was the honour of the Redeemer that the Spirit was both sent in his name and sent on his errand, to carry on

and perfect his undertaking. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, all the preaching and all the writing of the apostles, under the influence of the Spirit, the tongues, and miracles, were to glorify Christ. [2.] The Spirit glorified Christ by leading his followers into the truth as it is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 21. He assures them, *First*, That the Spirit should communicate the things of Christ to them: *He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.* As in essence he proceeded from the Son, so in influence and operation he derives from him. *He shall take ἐκ τοῦ ἰουῶ—of that which is mine.* All that the Spirit shows us, that is, applies to us, for our instruction and comfort, all that he gives us for our strength and quickening, and all that he secures and seals to us, did all belong to Christ, and was had and received from him. All was his, for he bought it, and paid dearly for it, and therefore he had reason to call it his own; his, for he first received it; it was given him as the head of the church, to be communicated by him to all his members. The Spirit came not to erect a new kingdom, but to advance and establish the same kingdom that Christ had erected, to maintain the same interest and pursue the same design; those therefore that pretend to the Spirit, and vilify Christ, give themselves the lie, for he came to glorify Christ. *Secondly*, That herein the things of God should be communicated to us. Lest any should think that the receiving of this would not make them much the richer, he adds, *All things that the Father hath are mine.* As God, all that self-existent light and self-sufficient happiness which the Father has, he has; as Mediator, all things are delivered to him of the Father (Matt. xi. 27); all that grace and truth which God designed to show to us he lodged in the hands of the Lord Jesus, Col. i. 19. Spiritual blessings in heavenly things are given by the Father to the Son for us, and the Son entrusts the Spirit to convey them to us. Some apply it to that which goes just before: *He shall show you things to come*, and so it is explained by Rev. i. 1. God gave it to Christ, and he signified it to John, who wrote what the Spirit said, Rev. i. 1.

16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. 17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? 18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. 19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him.



and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. 21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. 22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

Our Lord Jesus, for the comfort of his sorrowful disciples, here promises that he would visit them again.

I. Observe the intimation he gave them of the comfort he designed them, v. 16. Here he tells them,

1. That they should now shortly lose the sight of him: *A little while, and you that have seen me so long, and still desire to see me, shall not see me*; and therefore, if they had any good question to ask him, they must ask quickly, for he was now taking his leave of them. Note, It is good to consider how near to a period our seasons of grace are, that we may be quickened to improve them while they are continued. Now our eyes see our teachers, see the days of the Son of man; but, perhaps, yet *a little while, and we shall not see them*. They lost the sight of Christ, (1.) At his death, when he withdrew from this world, and never after showed himself openly in it. The most that death does to our Christian friends is to take them out of our sight, not out of being, not out of bliss, not out of all relation to us, only out of sight, and then not out of mind. (2.) At his ascension, when he withdrew from them (from those who, after his resurrection, had for some time conversed with him), *out of their sight*; a cloud received him, and, though they looked up stedfastly after him, *they saw him no more*, Acts i. 9, 10; 2 Kings ii. 12. See 2 Cor. v. 16.

2. That yet they should speedily recover the sight of him: *Again a little while, and you shall see me*, and therefore you ought not to sorrow as those that have no hope. His farewell was not a final farewell; they should see him again, (1.) At his resurrection, soon after his death, when *he showed himself alive*, by many infallible proofs, and this in a very little while, not forty hours. See Hos. vi. 2. (2.) By the pouring out of the Spirit, soon after his ascension, which scattered the mists of ignorance and mistake they were almost lost in, and gave them a much clearer insight

into the mysteries of Christ's gospel than they had yet had. The Spirit's coming was Christ's visit to his disciples, not a transient but a permanent one, and such a visit as abundantly retrieved the sight of him. (3.) At his second coming. They saw him again as they removed one by one to him at death, and they shall all see him together at the end of time, when *he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him*. It might be truly said of this that it was but *a little while, and they should see him*; for what are the days of time, to the days of eternity? 2 Pet. iii. 8, 9.

3. He assigns the reason: "*Because I go to the Father*;" and therefore," (1.) "I must leave you for a time, because my business calls me to the upper world, and you must be content to spare me, for really my business is yours." (2.) "Therefore you shall see me again shortly, for the Father will not detain me to your prejudice. If I go upon your errand, you shall see me again as soon as my business is done, as soon as is convenient."

It should seem, all this refers rather to his going away at death, and return at his resurrection, than his going away at his ascension, and his return at the end of time; for it was his death that was their grief, not his ascension (Luke xxiv. 52), and between his death and resurrection it was indeed *a little while*. And it may be read, not, *yet a little while* (it is not *ἔτι μικρόν*, as it is *ch. xii. 35*), but *μικρόν*—for *a little while you shall not see me*, namely, the three days of his lying in the grave; and again, *for a little while you shall see me*, namely, the forty days between his resurrection and ascension. Thus we may say of our ministers and Christian friends, *Yet a little while, and we shall not see them*, either they must leave us or we must leave them, but it is certain that we must part shortly, and yet not part for ever. It is but a good night to those whom we hope to see with joy in the morning.

II. The perplexity of the disciples upon the intimation given them; they were at a loss what to make of it (v. 17, 18): *Some of them said*, softly, *among themselves*, either some of the weakest, that were least able, or some of the most inquisitive, that were most desirous, to understand him, *What is this that he saith to us*? Though Christ had often spoken to this purport before, yet still they were in the dark; though *precept be upon precept*, it is in vain, unless God give the understanding. Now see here; 1. The disciples' weakness, in that they could not understand so plain a saying, to which Christ had already given them a key, having told them so often in plain terms that he should *be killed, and the third day rise again*; yet, say they, *We cannot tell what he saith*; for, (1.) *Sorrow had filled their heart*, and made them unapt to receive the impressions of comfort. The darkness of ignorance and the darkness of melancholy commonly increase

and thicken one another; mistakes cause griefs, and then griefs confirm mistakes. (2.) The notion of Christ's secular kingdom was so deeply rooted in them that they could make no sense at all of those sayings of his which they knew not how to reconcile with that notion. When we think the scripture must be made to agree with the false ideas we have imbibed, no wonder that we complain of its difficulty; but, when our reasonings are captivated to revelation, the matter becomes easy. (3.) It should seem, that which puzzled them was the *little while*. If he must go at last, yet they could not conceive how he should leave them quickly, when his stay hitherto had been so short, and so little while, comparatively. Thus it is hard for us to represent to ourselves that change as near which yet we know will come certainly, and may come suddenly. When we are told, *Yet a little while* and we must go hence, *yet a little while* and we must give up our account, we know not how to digest it; for we always took the vision to be *for a great while to come*, Ezek. xii. 27. 2. Their willingness to be instructed. When they were at a loss about the meaning of Christ's words, they conferred together upon it, and asked help of one another. By mutual converse about divine things we both borrow the light of others and improve our own. Observe how exactly they repeat Christ's words. Though we cannot fully solve every difficulty we meet with in scripture, yet we must not therefore throw it by, but revolve what we cannot explain, and wait till God shall reveal even this unto us.

III. The further explication of what Christ had said.

1. See here *why* Christ explained it (v. 19); because he *knew they were desirous to ask him*, and designed it. Note, The knots we cannot untie we must bring to him who alone can give an understanding. Christ *knew they were desirous to ask him*, but were bashful and ashamed to ask. Note, Christ takes cognizance of pious desires, though they be not as yet offered up, the *groanings that cannot be uttered*, and even anticipates them with the blessings of his goodness. Christ instructed those who he *knew were desirous to ask him*, though they did not ask. *Before we call, he answers*. Another reason why Christ explained it was because he observed them canvassing this matter among themselves: "*Do you enquire this among yourselves?*" Well, I will make it easy to you." This intimates to us who they are that Christ will teach: (1.) The humble, that confess their ignorance, for so much their enquiry implied. (2.) The diligent, that use the means they have: "*Do you enquire?*" You shall be taught. *To him that hath shall be given.*"

2. See here *how* he explained it; not by a nice and critical descant upon the words, but by bringing the thing more closely to them;

he had told them of *not seeing him, and seeing him*, and they did not apprehend his meaning and therefore he explains it by their sorrowing and rejoicing, because we commonly measure things according as they affect us (v. 20): *You shall weep and lament*, for my departure, *but the world shall rejoice* in it: *and you shall be sorrowful*, while I am absent, *but*, upon my return to you, *your sorrow will be turned into joy*. But he says nothing of the *little while*, because he saw that this perplexed them more than any thing; and it is of no consequence to us to know the *times and the seasons*. Note, Believers have joy or sorrow according as they have or have not a sight of Christ, and the tokens of his presence with them.

(1.) What Christ says here, and v. 21, 22, of their sorrow and joy, is primarily to be understood of the present state and circumstances of the disciples, and so we have,

[1.] Their grief foretold: *You shall weep and lament, and you shall be sorrowful*. The sufferings of Christ could not but be the sorrow of his disciples. They wept for him because they loved him; the pain of our friend is a pain to ourselves; when they slept, it was for sorrow, Luke xxii. 45. They wept for themselves, and their own loss, and the sad apprehensions they had of what would become of them when he was gone. It could not but be a grief to lose him for whom they had left their all, and from whom they expected so much. Christ has given notice to his disciples beforehand to expect sorrow, that they may treasure up comforts accordingly.

[2.] The world's rejoicing at the same time: *But the world shall rejoice*. That which is the grief of saints is the joy of sinners. *First*, Those that are *strangers to Christ* will continue in their carnal mirth, and not at all interest themselves in their sorrows. *It is nothing to them that pass by*, Lam. i. 12. *Nay, Secondly*, Those that are *enemies to Christ* will rejoice because they hope they have conquered him, and ruined his interest. When the chief priests had Christ upon the cross, we may suppose they made merry over him, as those that dwell on earth over the slain witnesses, Rev. xi. 10. Let it be no surprise to us if we see others triumphing, when we are *trembling for the ark*.

[3.] The return of joy to them in due time: *But your sorrow shall be turned into joy*. As the joy of the hypocrite, so the sorrow of the true Christian, is but for a moment. *The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord*. His resurrection was life from the dead to them, and their sorrow for Christ's sufferings was turned into a joy of such a nature as could not be damped and embittered by any sufferings of their own. They were *sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing* (2 Cor. vi. 10), had sorrowful lives and yet joyful hearts.

(2.) It is applicable to all the faithful fol-



lowers of the Lamb, and describes the common case of Christians

[1.] Their condition and disposition are both mournful; sorrows are their lot, and seriousness is their temper: those that are acquainted with Christ must, as he was, be *acquainted with grief; they weep and lament* for that which others make light of, their own sins, and the sins of those about them; they mourn with sufferers that mourn, and mourn for sinners that mourn not for themselves.

[2.] The world, at the same time, goes away with all the mirth; they laugh now, and spend their days so jovially that one would think they neither knew sorrow nor feared it. Carnal mirth and pleasures are surely none of the best things, for then the worst men would not have so large a share of them, and the favourites of heaven be such strangers to them.

[3.] Spiritual mourning will shortly be turned into eternal rejoicing. *Gladness is sown for the upright in heart, that sow in tears, and without doubt they will shortly reap in joy.* Their sorrow will not only be followed with joy, but turned into it; for the most precious comforts take rise from pious griefs. This he illustrates by a similitude taken from a woman in travail, to whose sorrows he compares those of his disciples, for their encouragement; for it is the will of Christ that his people should be a comforted people.

First, Here is the similitude or parable itself (v. 21): *A woman, we know, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, she is in exquisite pain, because her hour is come, the hour which nature and providence have fixed, which she has expected, and cannot escape; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, provided she be safely delivered, and the child be, though a Jabez (1 Chron. iv. 9), yet not a Benoni (Gen. xxxv. 18), then she remembers no more the anguish, her groans and complaints are all over, and the after-pains are more easily borne, for joy that a man is born into the world; ἄνθρωπος, one of the human race, a child, be it son or daughter, for the word signifies either. Observe,*

a. The fruit of the curse, in the sorrow and pain of a woman in travail, according to the sentence (Gen. iii. 16), *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth.* These pains are extreme, the greatest griefs and pains are compared to them (Ps. xlviii. 6; Isa. xliii. 8; xxi. 3; Jer. iv. 31; vi. 24), and they are inevitable, 1 Thess. v. 3. See what this world is; all its roses are surrounded with thorns; all the children of men are upon this account foolish children, that they are *the heaviness of her that bore them* from the very first. This comes of sin.

b. The fruit of the blessing, in the joy there is for a child born into the world. If God had not preserved the blessing in force after the fall, *Be fruitful and multiply*, parents could never have looked upon their children

with any comfort; but what is the fruit of a blessing is matter of joy; the birth of a living child is, (a.) The parents' joy; it makes them very glad, Jer. xx. 15. Though children are certain cares, uncertain comforts, and often prove the greatest crosses, yet it is natural to us to rejoice at their birth. Could we be sure that our children, like John, would be filled with the Holy Ghost, we might, indeed, like his parents, have *joy and gladness* in their birth, Luke i. 14, 15. But when we consider, not only that they are born in sin, but, as it is here expressed, that *they are born into the world*, a world of snares and a vale of tears, we shall see reason to rejoice with trembling, lest it should prove *better for them that they had never been born.* (b.) It is such joy as makes the anguish not to be remembered, or *remembered as waters that pass away*, Job xi. 16. *Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.* Gen. xli. 51. Now this is very proper to set forth, [a.] The sorrows of Christ's disciples in this world; they are like travelling pains, sure and sharp, but not to last long, and in order to a joyful product; they are in *pain to be delivered*, as the church is described (Rev. xii. 2), and the whole creation, Rom. viii. 22. And, [b.] Their joys after these sorrows, which will *wipe away all tears, for the former things are passed away*, Rev. xxi. 4. When they are born into that blessed world, and reap the fruit of all their services and sorrows, the toil and anguish of this world will be no more remembered, as Christ's were not, when he saw of the travail of his soul abundantly to his satisfaction, Isa. liii. 11.

Secondly, The application of the similitude (v. 22): "*You now have sorrow, and are likely to have more, but I will see you again, and you me, and then all will be well.*"

a. Here again he tells them of their sorrow: "*You now therefore have sorrow; therefore, because I am leaving you,*" as is intimated in the antithesis, *I will see you again.* Note, Christ's withdrawals are just cause of grief to his disciples. *If he hide his face, they cannot but be troubled.* When the sun sets, the sun-flower will hang the head. And Christ takes notice of these griefs, has a bottle for the tears, and a book for the sighs, of all gracious mourners.

b. He, more largely than before, assures them of a return of joy, Ps. xxx. 5, 11. He himself went through his own griefs, and bore ours, *for the joy that was set before him*; and he would have us encourage ourselves with the same prospect. Three things recommend the joy:—(a.) The cause of it: "*I will see you again.* I will make you a kind and friendly visit, to enquire after you, and minister comfort to you." Note, [a.] Christ will graciously return to those that wait for him, though *for a small moment* he has seemed to forsake them, Isa. liv. 7. Men, when they are exalted, will scarcely look upon their inferiors; but the exalted Jesus

will visit his disciples. They shall not only see him in his glory, but he will see them in their meanness. [b.] Christ's returns are returns of joy to all his disciples. When clouded evidences are cleared up and interrupted communion is revived, *then is the mouth filled with laughter.* (b.) The cordiality of it: *Your heart shall rejoice.* Divine consolations put gladness into the heart. Joy in the heart is solid, and not flashy; it is secret, and that which a stranger does not intermeddle with; it is sweet, and gives a good man satisfaction in himself; it is sure, and not easily broken in upon. Christ's disciples should heartily rejoice in his returns, sincerely and greatly. (c.) The continuance of it: *Your joy no man taketh from you.* Men will attempt to take their joy from them; they would if they could; but they shall not prevail. Some understand it of the eternal joy of those that are glorified; those that have entered into the joy of the Lord shall go no more out. Our joys on earth we are liable to be robbed of by a thousand accidents, but heavenly joys are everlasting. I rather understand it of the spiritual joys of those that are sanctified, particularly the apostles' joy in their apostleship. *Thanks be to God,* says Paul, in the name of the rest, *who always causes us to triumph,* 2 Cor. ii. 14. A malicious world would have taken it from them; if bonds and banishments, tortures and deaths, could have taken it from them, they would have lost it; but, when they took every thing else from them, they could not take this; *as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.* They could not rob them of their joy, because they could not separate them from the love of Christ, could not rob them of their God, nor of their treasure in heaven.

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. 24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. 25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. 26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: 27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

An answer to their askings is here promised, for their further comfort. Now there are two ways of asking: asking by way of enquiry, which is the asking of the ignorant; and asking by way of request, which is the

asking of the indigent. Christ here speaks of both.

I. By way of enquiry, they should not need to ask (v. 23): *"In that day you shall ask me nothing;"* οὐκ ἐρωτήσετε οὐδέν—you shall ask no questions; "you shall have such a clear knowledge of gospel mysteries, by the opening of your understandings, that you shall not need to enquire" (as Heb. viii. 11, *they shall not teach*); "you shall have more knowledge on a sudden than hitherto you have had by diligent attendance." They had asked some ignorant questions (as ch. ix. 2), some ambitious questions (as Matt. xviii. 1), some distrustful ones (as Matt. xix. 27), some impertinent ones (as ch. xxi. 21), some curious ones (as Acts i. 6); but, after the Spirit was poured out, nothing of all this. In the story of the apostles' Acts we seldom find them asking questions, as David, *Shall I do this? Or, Shall I go thither?* For they were constantly under a divine guidance. In that weighty case of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, Peter went, *nothing doubting*, Acts x. 20. Asking questions supposes us at a loss, or at least at a stand, and the best of us have need to ask questions; but we should aim at such a full assurance of understanding that we may not hesitate, but be constantly led in a plain path both of truth and duty.

Now for this he gives a reason (v. 25), which plainly refers to this promise, that they should not need to ask questions: *"These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs,* in such a way as you have thought not so plain and intelligible as you could have wished, *but the time cometh when I shall show you plainly,* as plainly as you can desire, *of the Father,* so that you shall not need to ask questions."

1. The great thing Christ would lead them into was the knowledge of God: *"I will show you the Father,* and bring you acquainted with him." This is that which Christ designs to give and which all true Christians desire to have. When Christ would express the greatest favour intended for his disciples, he tells them that he would *show them plainly of the Father*; for what is the happiness of heaven, but immediately and everlastingly to see God? *To know God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* is the greatest mystery for the understanding to please itself with the contemplation of; and to know him as our Father is the greatest happiness for the will and affections to please themselves with the choice and enjoyment of.

2. Of this he had hitherto spoken to them in proverbs, which are wise and instructive sayings, but figurative, and resting in generals. Christ had spoken many things very plainly to them, and expounded his parables privately to the disciples, but, (1.) Considering their dulness, and unaptness to receive what he said to them, he might be said to speak in proverbs; what he said to them was as a book sealed, Isa. xxix. 11. (2.) Com-



paring the discoveries he had made to them, in what he had spoken to their ears, with what he would make to them when he would *put his Spirit into their heart*, all hitherto had been but proverbs. It would be a pleasing surprise to themselves, and they would think themselves in a new world, when they would reflect upon all their former notions as confused and enigmatical, compared with their present clear and distinct knowledge of divine things. *The ministration of the letter* was nothing to *that of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8—11. (3.) Confining it to what he had said of *the Father*, and the counsels of *the Father*, what he had said was very dark, compared with what was shortly to be revealed, Col. ii. 2.

3. He would speak to them *plainly*, *παρηγορία*—with freedom, of the Father. When the Spirit was poured out, the apostles attained to a much greater knowledge of divine things than they had before, as appears by the utterance the Spirit gave them, Acts ii. 4. They were led into the mystery of those things of which they had previously a very confused idea; and what the Spirit showed them Christ is here said to show them, for, as the Father speaks by the Son, so the Son by the Spirit. But this promise will have its full accomplishment in heaven, where we shall see the Father as he is, *face to face*, not as we do now, *through a glass darkly* (1 Cor. xiii. 12), which is matter of comfort to us under the cloud of present darkness, by reason of which we cannot *order our speech*, but often disorder it. While we are here, we have many questions to ask concerning the invisible God and the invisible world; but in that day we shall see all things clearly, and *ask no more questions*.

II. He promises that by way of request they should ask nothing in vain. It is taken for granted that all Christ's disciples give themselves to prayer. He had taught them by his precept and pattern to be much in prayer; this must be their support and comfort when he had left them; their instruction, direction, strength, and success, must be fetched in by prayer. Now,

1. Here is an express promise of a grant, v. 23. The preface to this promise is such as makes it inviolably sure, and leaves no room to question it: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I pledge my veracity upon it.*" The promise itself is incomparably rich and sweet; the golden sceptre is here held out to us, with this word, *What is thy petition, and it shall be granted?* For he says, *Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.* We had it before, ch. xiv. 13. What would we more? The promise is as express as we can desire. (1.) We are here taught how to seek; we must *ask the Father in Christ's name*; we must have an eye to God as a Father, and come as children to him; and to Christ as Mediator, and come as clients. Asking of the Father includes a sense of spiritual wants and a desire of spiri-

tual blessings, with a conviction that they are to be had from God only. It includes also humility of address to him, with a believing confidence in him, as a Father able and ready to help us. Asking in Christ's name includes an acknowledgment of our own unworthiness to receive any favour from God, a complacency in the method God has taken of keeping up a correspondence with us by his Son, and an entire dependence upon Christ as *the Lord our Righteousness*. (2.) We are here told how we shall speed: *He will give it to you.* What more can we wish for than to have what we want, nay, to have what we will, in conformity to God's will, for the asking? *He will give it to you* from whom *proceedeth every good and perfect gift*. What Christ purchased by the merit of his death, he needed not for himself, but intended it for, and consigned it to, his faithful followers; and having given a valuable consideration for it, which was accepted in full, by this promise he draws a bill as it were upon the treasury in heaven, which we are to present by prayer, and *in his name* to ask for that which is purchased and promised, according to the true intent of the new covenant. Christ had promised them great illumination by the Spirit, but they must pray for it, and did so, Acts i. 14. God will for this be enquired of. He had promised them perfection hereafter, but what shall they do in the mean time? They must continue praying. Perfect fruition is reserved for the land of our rest; asking and receiving are the comfort of the land of our pilgrimage.

2. Here is an invitation for them to petition. It is thought sufficient if great men permit addresses, but Christ calls upon us to petition, v. 24.

(1.) He looks back upon their practice hitherto: *Hitherto have you asked nothing in my name.* This refers either, [1.] To the matter of their prayers: "You have asked nothing comparatively, nothing to what you might have asked, and will ask when the Spirit is poured out. See what a generous benefactor our Lord Jesus is, above all benefactors; he gives liberally, and is so far from upbraiding us with the frequency and largeness of his gifts that he rather upbraids us with the seldomness and straitness of our requests: "*You have asked nothing* in comparison of what you want, and what I have to give, and have promised to give." We are told to *open our mouth wide*. Or, [2.] To the name in which they prayed. They prayed many a prayer, but never so expressly in the name of Christ as now he was directing them to do; for he had not as yet offered up that great sacrifice in the virtue of which our prayers were to be accepted, nor entered upon his intercession for us, the incense whereof was to perfume all our devotions, and so enable us to pray in his name. Hitherto they had cast out devils, and healed

diseases, in the name of Christ, as a king and a prophet, but they could not as yet distinctly pray in his name as a priest.

(2.) He looks forward to their practice for the future: *Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* Here, [1.] He directs them to ask for all that which they needed and he had promised. [2.] He assures them that they shall receive. What we ask from a principle of grace God will graciously give: *You shall receive it.* There is something more in this than in the promise that he will give it. He will not only give it, but give you to receive it, give you the comfort and benefit of it, *a heart to eat of it*, Eccl. vi. 2. [3.] That hereby *their joy shall be full.* This denotes, *First*, The blessed effect of the *prayer of faith*; it helps to fill up the *joy of faith*. Would we have our joy full, as full as it is capable of being in this world, we must be *much in prayer*. When we are told to *rejoice evermore*, it follows immediately, *Pray without ceasing*. See how high we are to aim in prayer—not only at peace, but joy, a *fulness of joy*. Or, *Secondly*, The blessed effects of the *answer of peace*: “Ask, and you shall receive that which will fill your joy.” God’s gifts, through Christ, fill the treasures of the soul, they fill its joys, Prov. viii. 21. “Ask for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and you shall receive it; and, whereas other knowledge *increaseth sorrow* (Eccl. i. 18), the knowledge he gives will increase, will fill, your joy.”

3. Here are the grounds upon which they might hope to speed (v. 26, 27), which are summed up in short by the apostle (1 John ii. 1): “*We have an advocate with the Father.*”

(1.) We have an advocate; as to this, Christ saw cause at present not to insist upon it, only to make the following encouragement shine the brighter: “*I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you.* Suppose I should not tell you that I will intercede for you, should not undertake to solicit every particular cause you have depending there, yet it may be a general ground of comfort that I have settled a correspondence between you and God, have erected a throne of grace, and consecrated for you a *new and living way into the holiest*.” He speaks as if they needed not any further favours, when he had prevailed for the gift of the Holy Ghost to *make intercession within them*, as a Spirit of adoption, crying *Abba, Father*; as if they had no further need of him to pray for them now; but we shall find that he does more for us than he says he will. Men’s performances often come short of their promises, but Christ’s go beyond them.

(2.) We have to do with a Father, which is so great an encouragement that it does in a manner supersede the other: *For the Father himself loveth you*, *φιλεῖ ὑμᾶς*, he is a friend to you, and you cannot be better befriended.” Note, The disciples of Christ are the beloved of God himself—Christ not only

turned away God’s wrath from us, and brought us into a covenant of peace and reconciliation, but purchased his favour for us, and brought us into a covenant of friendship. Observe what an emphasis is laid upon this: “*The Father himself loveth you*, who is perfectly happy in the enjoyment of himself, whose self-love is both his infinite rectitude and his infinite blessedness; yet he is pleased to love you.” The Father himself, whose favour you have forfeited, and whose wrath you have incurred, and with whom you need an advocate, he himself now loves you. Observe, [1.] Why the Father loved the disciples of Christ: *Because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God*, that is, because you are my disciples indeed: not as if the love began on their side, but when by his grace he has wrought in us a love to him he is well pleased with the work of his own hands. See here, *First*, What is the character of Christ’s disciples; they love him, because they *believe he came out from God*, is the only-begotten of the Father, and his high-commissioner to the world. Note, Faith in Christ works by love to him, Gal. v. 6. If we believe him to be the Son of God, we cannot but love him as infinitely lovely in himself; and, if we believe him to be our Saviour, we cannot but love him as the most kind to us. Observe with what respect Christ is pleased to speak of his disciples’ love to him, and how kindly he took it; he speaks of it as that which recommended them to his Father’s favour: You have loved me and believed in me when the world has hated and rejected me; and you shall be distinguished, who have thus distinguished yourselves.” *Secondly*, See what advantage Christ’s faithful disciples have, the Father loves them, and that because they love Christ; so well pleased is he in him that he is well pleased with all his friends. [2.] What encouragement this gave them in prayer. They need not fear speeding when they came to one that loved them, and wished them well. *First*, This cautions us against hard thoughts of God. When we are taught in prayer to plead Christ’s merit and intercession, it is not as if all the kindness were in Christ only, and in God nothing but wrath and fury; no, the matter is not so, the Father’s love and good-will appointed Christ to be the Mediator; so that we owe Christ’s merit to God’s mercy in giving him for us. *Secondly*, Let it cherish and confirm in us good thoughts of God. Believers, that love Christ, ought to know that God loves them, and therefore to come boldly to him as children to a loving Father.

28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. 29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly



and speakest no proverb. 30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. 31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? 32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. 33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Two things Christ here comforts his disciples with:—

I. With an assurance that, though he was leaving the world, he was returning to his Father, from whom he came forth v. 28—32, where we have,

1. A plain declaration of Christ's mission from the Father, and his return to him (v. 28): *I came forth from the Father, and am come, as you see, into the world. Again, I leave the world, as you will see shortly, and go to the Father.* This is the conclusion of the whole matter. There was nothing he had more inculcated upon them than these two things—whence he came, and whither he went, the *Alpha* and *Omega* of the *mystery of godliness* (1 Tim. iii. 16), that the Redeemer, in his entrance, was *God manifest in the flesh*, and in his exit was *received up into glory*.

(1.) These two great truths are here, [1.] Contracted, and put into a few words. Brief summaries of Christian doctrine are of great use to young beginners. The principles of the oracles of God brought into a little compass in creeds and catechisms have, like the beams of the sun contracted in a burning glass, conveyed divine light and heat with a wonderful power. Such we have, Job xxviii. 28; Eccl. xii. 13; 1 Tim. i. 15; Tit. ii. 11, 12; 1 John v. 11; much in a little. [2.] Compared, and set the one over against the other. There is an admirable harmony in divine truths; they both corroborate and illustrate one another; Christ's coming and his going do so. Christ had commended his disciples for believing that he came forth from God (v. 27), and thence infers the necessity and equity of his returning to God again, which therefore should not seem to them either strange or sad. Note, The due improvement of what we know and own would help us into the understanding of that which seems difficult and doubtful.

(2.) If we ask concerning the Redeemer *whence he came, and whither he went*, we are

told, [1.] That he *came from the Father*, who sanctified and sealed him; and he came into this world, this lower world, this world of mankind, among whom by his incarnation he was pleased to incorporate himself. Here his business lay, and hither he came to attend it. He left his home for this strange country; his palace for this cottage; wonderful condescension! [2.] That, when he had done his work on earth, he left the world, and went back to his Father at his ascension. He was not forced away, but made it his own act and deed to leave the world, to return to it no more till he comes to put an end to it; yet still he is spiritually present with his church, and will be to the end.

2. The disciples' satisfaction in this declaration (v. 29, 30): *Lo, now speakest thou plainly.* It should seem, this one word of Christ did them more good than all the rest, though he had said many things likely enough to fasten upon them. The Spirit, as the wind, blows when and where, and by what word he pleases; perhaps a word that has been *spoken once, yea twice*, and not perceived, yet, being often repeated, takes hold at last. Two things they improved in by this saying:—

(1.) In knowledge: *Lo, now speakest thou plainly.* When they were in the dark concerning what he said, they did not say, *Lo, now speakest thou obscurely*, as blaming him; but now that they apprehend his meaning they give him glory for condescending to their capacity: *Lo, now speakest thou plainly.* Divine truths are most likely to do good when they are spoken plainly, 1 Cor. ii. 4. Observe how they triumphed, as the mathematician did with his *εῤῥηκα, εῤῥηκα*, when he had hit upon a demonstration he had long been in quest of: *I have found it, I have found it.* Note, When Christ is pleased to speak plainly to our souls, and to bring us with open face to behold his glory, we have reason to rejoice in it.

(2.) In faith: *Now are we sure.* Observe, [1.] What was the matter of their faith: *We believe that thou camest forth from God.* He had said (v. 27) that they did believe this; "Lord" (say they) "we do believe it, and we have cause to believe it, and we know that we believe it, and have the comfort of it."

[2.] What was the motive of their faith—his omniscience. This proved him a teacher come from God, and more than a prophet, that he knew all things, which they were convinced of by this that he resolved those doubts which were hid in their hearts, and answered the scruples they had not confessed. Note, Those know Christ best that know him by experience, that can say of his power, *It works in me; of his love, He loved me.* And this proves Christ not only to have a divine mission, but to be a divine person, that he is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, therefore the essential, eternal Word, Heb. iv. 12, 13. He has made all the churches to know that he searches the reins and the

heart, Rev. ii. 23. This confirmed the faith of the disciples here, as it made the first impression upon the woman of Samaria that Christ told her all things that ever she did (ch. iv. 29), and upon Nathanael that Christ saw him under the fig-tree, ch. i. 48, 49.

These words, and needest not that any man should ask thee, may bespeak either, *First*, Christ's aptness to teach. He prevents us with his instructions, and is communicative of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hid in him, and needs not to be importuned. Or, *Secondly*, His ability to teach: "Thou needest not, as other teachers, to have the learners' doubts told thee, for thou knowest, without being told, what they stumble at." The best of teachers can only answer what is spoken, but Christ can answer what is thought, what we are afraid to ask, as the disciples were, Mark ix. 32. Thus he can have compassion, Heb. v. 2.

3. The gentle rebuke Christ gave the disciples for their confidence that they now understood him, v. 31, 32. Observing how they triumphed in their attainments, he said, "*Do you now believe?*" Do you now look upon yourselves as advanced and confirmed disciples? Do you now think you shall make no more blunders? Alas! you know not your own weakness; you will very shortly be scattered every man to his own," &c. Here we have,

(1.) A question, designed to put them upon consideration: *Do you now believe?* [1.] "If now, why not sooner? Have you not heard the same things many a time before?" Those who after many instructions and invitations are at last persuaded to believe have reason to be ashamed that they stood it out so long. [2.] "If now, why not ever? When an hour of temptation comes, where will your faith be then?" As far as there is inconstancy in our faith there is cause to question the sincerity of it, and to ask, "Do we indeed believe?"

(2.) A prediction of their fall, that, how confident soever they were now of their own stability, in a little time they would all desert him, which was fulfilled that very night, when, upon his being seized by a party of the guards, all his disciples forsook him and fled, Matt. xxvi. 56. They were scattered, [1.] From one another; they shifted every one for his own safety, without any care or concern for each other. Troublous times are times of scattering to Christian societies; in the cloudy and dark day the flock of Christ is dispersed, Ezek. xxxiv. 12. So Christ, as a society, is not visible. [2.] Scattered from him: *You shall leave me alone*. They should have been witnesses for him upon his trial, should have ministered to him in his sufferings; if they could have given him no comfort they might have done him some credit; but they were ashamed of his chain, and afraid of sharing with him in his sufferings, and left him alone. Note, Many a good cause, when it is distressed by its enemies, is deserted by its friends. The disciples had

continued with Christ in his other temptations, and yet turned their back upon him now; those that are tried, do not always prove trusty. If we at any time find our friends unkind to us, let us remember that Christ's were so to him. When they left him alone, they were scattered every man to his own; not to their own possessions or habitations, these were in Galilee; but to their own friends and acquaintance in Jerusalem; every one went his own way, where he fancied he should be most safe. Every man to secure his own; himself and his own life. Note, Those will not dare to suffer for their religion that seek their own things more than the things of Christ, and that look upon the things of this world as their *ra idia*—their own property, and in which their happiness is bound up. Now observe here, *First*, Christ knew before that his disciples would thus desert him in the critical moment, and yet he was still tender of them, and in nothing unkind. We are ready to say of some, "If we could have foreseen their ingratitude, we would not have been so prodigal of our favours to them;" Christ did foresee theirs, and yet was kind to them. *Secondly*, He told them of it, to be a rebuke to their exultation in their present attainments: "*Do you now believe?*" Be not high-minded, but fear; for you will find your faith so sorely shaken as to make it questionable whether it be sincere or no, in a little time." Note, Even when we are taking the comfort of our graces, it is good to be reminded of our danger from our corruptions. When our faith is strong, our love flaming, and our evidences are clear, yet we cannot infer thence that *to-morrow shall be as this day*. Even when we have most reason to think we stand, yet we have reason enough to take heed lest we fall. *Thirdly*, He spoke of it as a thing very near. *The hour was already come*, in a manner, when they would be as shy of him as ever they had been fond of him. Note, A little time may produce great changes, both concerning us and in us.

(3.) An assurance of his own comfort notwithstanding: *Yet I am not alone*. He would not be thought to complain of their deserting him, as if it were any real damage to him; for in their absence he should be sure of his Father's presence, which was *instar omnium*—every thing: *The Father is with me*. We may consider this, [1.] As a privilege peculiar to the Lord Jesus; the Father was so with him in his sufferings as he never was with any, for still he was in the bosom of the Father. The divine nature did not desert the human nature, but supported it, and put an invincible comfort and an inestimable value into his sufferings. The Father had engaged to be with him in his whole undertaking (Ps. lxxxix. 21, &c.), and to preserve him (Isa. xlix. 8); this emboldened him, Isa. l. 7. Even when he complained of his Father's forsaking him, yet he



called him *My God*, and presently after was so well assured of his favourable presence with him as to commit his Spirit into his hand. This he had comforted himself with all along (*ch. viii. 29*), *He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone*, and especially now at last. This assists our faith in the acceptableness of Christ's satisfaction; no doubt, the Father was well pleased in him, for he went along with him in his undertaking from first to last. [2.] As a privilege common to all believers, by virtue of their union with Christ; when they are alone, they are *not alone*, but *the Father is with them*. *First*, When solitude is their choice, when they are alone, as Isaac in the field, Nathanael under the fig-tree, Peter upon the house-top, meditating and praying, the Father is with them. Those that converse with God in solitude are never less alone than when alone. A good God and a good heart are good company at any time. *Secondly*, When solitude is their affliction, their enemies lay them alone, and their friends leave them so, their company, like Job's, is made desolate; yet they are not so much alone as they are thought to be, *the Father is with them*, as he was with Joseph in his bonds and with John in his banishment. In their greatest troubles they are as one whom his father pities, as one whom his mother comforts. And, while we have God's favourable presence with us, we are happy, and ought to be easy, though all the world forsake us. *Non Deo tribuimus justum honorem nisi solus ipse nobis sufficiat*—We do not render due honour to God, unless we deem him alone all-sufficient.—Calvin.

II. He comforts them with a promise of peace in him, by virtue of his victory over the world, whatever troubles they might meet with in it (*v. 33*): "*These things have I spoken, that in me you might have peace; and if you have it not in me you will not have it at all, for in the world you shall have tribulation; you must expect no other, and yet may cheer up yourselves, for I have overcome the world.*" Observe,

1. The end Christ aimed at in preaching this farewell sermon to his disciples: *That in him they might have peace*. He did not hereby intend to give them a full view of that doctrine which they were shortly to be made masters of by the pouring out of the Spirit, but only to satisfy them for the present that his departure from them was really for the best. Or, we may take it more generally: Christ had said all this to them that by enjoying him they might have the best enjoyment of themselves. Note, (1.) It is the will of Christ that his disciples should have peace within, whatever their troubles may be without. (2.) Peace in Christ is the only true peace, and in him alone believers have it, *for this man shall be the peace*, Mic. v. 5. Through him we have peace with God, and so in him we have peace in our own

minds. (3.) The word of Christ aims at this, *that in him we may have peace*. Peace is the fruit of the lips, and of his lips, Isa. lvii. 19.

2. The entertainment they were likely to meet with in the world: "You shall not have outward peace, never expect it." Though they were sent to proclaim *peace on earth*, and *good-will towards men*, they must expect trouble on earth, and ill-will from men. Note, It has been the lot of Christ's disciples to have more or less tribulation in this world. Men persecute them because they are so good, and God corrects them because they are no better. Men design to cut them off from the earth, and God designs by affliction to make them meet for heaven; and so between both *they shall have tribulation*.

3. The encouragement Christ gives them with reference hereto: *But be of good cheer, θαρσύνετε*. "Not only be of good comfort, but be of good courage; have a good heart on it, all shall be well." Note, In the midst of the tribulations of this world it is the duty and interest of Christ's disciples to be of good cheer, to keep up their delight in God whatever is pressing, and their hope in God whatever is threatening; as sorrowful indeed, in compliance with the temper of the climate, and yet always rejoicing, always cheerful (2 Cor. vi. 10), even *in tribulation*, Rom. v. 3.

4. The ground of that encouragement: *I have overcome the world*. Christ's victory is a Christian's triumph. Christ overcame the prince of this world, disarmed him, and cast him out; and still treads Satan under our feet. He overcame the children of this world, by the conversion of many to the faith and obedience of his gospel, making them the children of his kingdom. When he sends his disciples to preach the gospel to all the world, "*Be of good cheer*," says he, "*I have overcome the world* as far as I have gone, and so shall you; though you have tribulation in the world, yet you shall gain your point, and captivate the world," Rev. vi. 2. He overcame the wicked of the world, for many a time he put his enemies to silence, to shame; "And be you of good cheer, for the Spirit will enable you to do so too." He overcame the evil things of the world by submitting to them; he endured the cross, despising it and the shame of it; and he overcame the good things of it by being wholly dead to them; its honours had no beauty in his eye, its pleasures no charms. Never was there such a conqueror of the world as Christ was, and we ought to be encouraged by it, (1.) Because Christ has overcome the world before us; so that we may look upon it as a conquered enemy, that has many a time been baffled. Nay, (2.) He has conquered it for us, as the captain of our salvation. We are interested in his victory; by his cross the world is *crucified to us*, which bespeaks it completely conquered and put into our possession; all is yours.

even the world. Christ having overcome the world, believers have nothing to do but to pursue their victory, and divide the spoil; and this we do by faith, 1 John v. 4. *We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

## CHAP. XVII.

This chapter is a prayer, it is the Lord's prayer, the Lord Christ's prayer. There was one Lord's prayer which he taught us to pray, and did not pray himself, for he needed not to pray for the forgiveness of sin; but this was properly and peculiarly his, and suited him only as a Mediator, and is a sample of his intercession, and yet is of use to us both for instruction and encouragement in prayer. Observe, 1. The circumstances of the prayer, ver. 1. 11. The prayer itself. 1. He prays for himself, ver. 1—5. 2. He prays for those that are his. And in this see, (1.) The general pleas with which he introduces his petitions for them, ver. 6—10. (2.) The particular petitions he puts up for them, [1.] That they might be kept, ver. 11—16. [2.] That they might be sanctified, ver. 17—19. [3.] That they might be united, ver. 11 and 20—23. [4.] That they might be glorified, ver. 24—26.

**THESE** words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Here we have, I. The circumstances of this prayer, v. 1. Many a solemn prayer Christ made in the days of his flesh (sometimes he continued all night in prayer), but none of his prayers are recorded so fully as this. Observe,

1. The time when he prayed this prayer; when he had *spoken these words*, had given the foregoing farewell to his disciples, he prayed this prayer in their hearing; so that, (1.) It was a prayer after sermon; when he had spoken from God to them, he turned to speak to God for them. Note, Those we preach to we must pray for. He that was to prophesy upon the dry bones was also to pray, *Come, O breath, and breathe upon them.* And the word preached should be prayed over, for *God gives the increase.* (2.) It was a prayer after sacrament; after Christ and his disciples had eaten the passover and the Lord's supper together, and he had given them a suitable exhortation, he closed the solemnity with this prayer, that God would preserve the good impressions of the ordinance upon them. (3.) It was a family-prayer. Christ's disciples were his family, and, to set a good example before masters of families, he not only, as a son of Abraham, taught his household (Gen. xviii. 19), but, as

a son of David, blessed his household (2 Sam. vi. 20), prayed for them and with them. (4.) It was a parting prayer. When we and our friends are parting, it is good to part with prayer, Acts xx. 36. Christ was parting by death, and that parting should be sanctified and sweetened by prayer. Dying Jacob blessed the twelve patriarchs, dying Moses the twelve tribes, and so, here, dying Jesus the twelve apostles. (5.) It was a prayer that was a preface to his sacrifice, which he was now about to offer on earth, specifying the favours and blessings designed to be purchased by the merit of his death for those that were his; like a deed *leading the uses of a fine*, and directing to what intents and purposes it shall be levied. Christ prayed then as a priest now offering sacrifice, in the virtue of which all prayers were to be made. (6.) It was a prayer that was a specimen of his intercession, which he ever lives to make for us within the veil. Not that in his exalted state he addresses himself to his Father by way of humble petition, as when he was on earth. No, his intercession in heaven is a presenting of his merit to his Father, with a suing out of the benefit of it for all his chosen ones.

2. The outward expression of fervent desire which he used in this prayer: He *lifted up his eyes to heaven*, as before (ch. xi. 41); not that Christ needed thus to engage his own attention, but he was pleased thus to sanctify this gesture to those that use it, and justify it against those that ridicule it. It is significant of the lifting up of the soul to God in prayer, Ps. xxv. 1. *Sursum corda* was anciently used as a call to prayer, *Up with your hearts*, up to heaven; thither we must direct our desires in prayer, and thence we must expect to receive the good things we pray for.

II. The first part of the prayer itself, in which Christ prays for himself. Observe here,

1. He prays to God as a Father: He *lifted up his eyes, and said, Father.* Note, As prayer is to be made to God only, so it is our duty in prayer to eye him as a Father, and to call him *our Father.* All that have the Spirit of adoption are taught to cry *Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6. If God be our Father, we have liberty of access to him, ground of confidence in him, and great expectations from him. Christ calls him here *holy Father* (v. 11), and *righteous Father*, v. 25. For it will be of great use to us in prayer, both for direction and for encouragement, to call God as we hope to find him.

2. He prayed for himself first. Though Christ, as God, was prayed to, Christ, as man, prayed; thus it *became him to fulfil all righteousness.* It was said to him, as it is said to us, *Ask, and I will give thee*, Ps. ii. 8. What he had purchased he must ask for; and shall we expect to have what we never merited, but have a thousand times forfeited,



unless we pray for it? This puts an honour upon prayer, that it was the messenger Christ sent on his errands, the way in which even he corresponded with Heaven. It likewise gives great encouragement to praying people, and cause to hope that even the *prayer of the destitute* shall not be despised; time was when he that is advocate for us had a cause of his own to solicit, a great cause, on the success of which depended all his honour as Mediator; and this he was to solicit in the same method that is prescribed to us, *by prayers and supplications* (Heb. v. 7), so that he knows the heart of a petitioner (Exod. xxiii. 9), he knows the way. Now observe, Christ began with prayer for himself, and afterwards prayed for his disciples; this charity must begin at home, though it must not end there. We must love and pray for our neighbour as ourselves, and therefore must in a right manner love and pray for ourselves first. Christ was much shorter in his prayer for himself than in his prayer for his disciples. Our prayers for the church must not be crowded into a corner of our prayers; in making *supplication for all saints*, we have room enough to enlarge, and should not straiten ourselves. Now here are two petitions which Christ puts up for himself, and these two are one—that he might be glorified. But this one petition, *Glorify thou me*, is twice put up, because it has a double reference. To the prosecution of his undertaking further: *Glorify me, that I may glorify thee*, in doing what is agreed upon to be yet done, v. 1—3. And to the performance of his undertaking hitherto: “*Glorify me, for I have glorified thee*. I have done my part, and now, Lord, do thine,” v. 4, 5.

(1.) Christ here prays to be *glorified*, in order to his *glorifying God* (v. 1): *Glorify thy Son* according to thy promise, *that thy Son may glorify thee* according to his undertaking. Here observe,

[1.] What he prays for—that he might be glorified in this world: “*The hour is come* when all the powers of darkness will combine to vilify thy Son; now, Father, glorify him.” The Father glorified the Son upon earth, *First*, Even in his sufferings, by the signs and wonders which attended them. When they that came to take him were thunder-struck with a word,—when Judas confessed him innocent, and sealed that confession with his own guilty blood,—when the judge’s wife asleep, and the judge himself awake, pronounced him righteous,—when the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple rent, then the Father not only justified, but glorified the Son. Nay, *Secondly*, Even by his sufferings; when he was crucified, he was magnified, he was glorified, *ch. xiii. 31*. It was in his cross that he conquered Satan and death; his thorns were a crown, and Pilate in the inscription over his head wrote more than he thought. But, *Thirdly*, Much more after his sufferings. The Father glorified the Son

when he raised him from the dead, showed him openly to chosen witnesses, and poured out the Spirit to support and plead his cause, and to set up his kingdom among men, then he *glorified him*. This he here prays for, and insists upon.

[2.] What he pleads to enforce this request.

*First*, He pleads relation: *Glorify thy Son; thy Son as God, as Mediator*. It is in consideration of this that the heathen are given him for his inheritance; for *thou art my Son*, Ps. ii. 7, 8. The devil had tempted him to renounce his sonship with an offer of the kingdoms of this world; but he rejected the offer with disdain, and depended upon his Father for his preferment, and here applies himself to him for it. Note, Those that have received the adoption of sons may in faith pray for the inheritance of sons; if sanctified, then glorified: *Father, glorify thy Son*.

*Secondly*, He pleads the time: *The hour is come*; the season prefixed to an hour. The hour of Christ’s passion was determined in the counsel of God. He had often said his hour was not yet come; but now it was come, and he knew it. *Man knows not his time* (Eccl. ix. 12), but the Son of man did. He calls it *this hour* (*ch. xii. 27*), and here *the hour*; compare Mark xiv. 35; *ch. xvi. 21*. For the hour of the Redeemer’s death, which was also the hour of the Redeemer’s birth, was the most signal and remarkable hour, and, without doubt, the most critical, that ever was since the clock of time was first set a going. Never was there such an hour as that, nor did ever any hour challenge such expectations of it before, nor such reflections upon it after. 1. “*The hour is come* in the midst of which I need to be owned.” Now is the hour when this grand affair is come to a crisis; after many a skirmish the decisive battle between heaven and hell is now to be fought, and that great cause in which God’s honour and man’s happiness are together embarked must now be either won or lost for ever. The two champions David and Goliath, Michael and the dragon, are now entering the lists; the trumpet sounds for an engagement that will be irretrievably fatal either to the one or to the other: “*Now glorify thy Son*, now give him victory over *principalities and powers*, now let the bruising of his heel be the breaking of the serpent’s head; now let thy Son be so upheld as not to fail nor be discouraged.” When Joshua went forth conquering and to conquer, it is said, *The Lord magnified Joshua*; so he glorified his Son when he made the cross his triumphant chariot. 2. “*The hour is come* in the close of which I expect to be crowned; *the hour is come* when I am to be glorified, and set at thy right hand.” Betwixt him and that glory there intervened a bloody scene of suffering; but, being short, he speaks as if he made little of it: *The hour is come that I must be glorified*; and he did not expect it



till then. Good Christians in a trying hour, particularly a dying hour, may thus plead: "*Now the hour is come, stand by me, appear for me, now or never; now the earthly tabernacle is to be dissolved, the hour is come that I should be glorified.*" 2 Cor. v. 1.

Thirdly, He pleads the Father's own interest and concern herein: *That thy Son may also glorify thee*; for he had consecrated his whole undertaking to his Father's honour. He desired to be carried triumphantly through his sufferings to his glory, that he might glorify the Father two ways:—1. By the death of the cross, which he was now to suffer. *Father, glorify thy name*, expressed the great intention of his sufferings, which was to retrieve his Father's injured honour among men, and, by his satisfaction, to come up to the glory of God, which man, by his sin, came short of: "Father, own me in my sufferings, that I may honour thee by them." 2. By the doctrine of the cross, which was now shortly to be published to the world, by which God's kingdom was to be re-established among men. He prays that his Father would so grace his sufferings, and crown them, as not only to take off the offence of the cross, but to make it, to those that are saved, the wisdom of God and the power of God. If God had not glorified Christ crucified, by raising him from the dead, his whole undertaking had been crushed; therefore *glorify me, that I may glorify thee*. Now hereby he hath taught us, (1.) What to eye and aim at in our prayers, in all our designs and desires—and that is, the honour of God. It being our chief end to glorify God, other things must be sought and attended to in subordination and subserviency to the Lord. "Do this and the other for thy servant, that thy servant may glorify thee. Give me health, that I may glorify thee with my body; success, that I may glorify thee with my estate," &c. *Hallowed be thy name* must be our first petition, which must fix our end in all our other petitions, 1 Peter iv. 11. (2.) He hath taught us what to expect and hope for. If we sincerely set ourselves to glorify our Father, he will not be wanting to do that for us which is requisite to put us into a capacity of glorifying him, to give us the grace he knows sufficient, and the opportunity he sees convenient. But, if we secretly honour ourselves more than him, it is just with him to leave us in the hand of our own counsels, and then, instead of honouring ourselves, we shall shame ourselves.

Fourthly, He pleads his commission (v. 2, 3); he desires to glorify his Father, in conformity to, and in pursuance of, the commission given him: "*Glorify thy Son, as thou hast given him power, glorify him in the execution of the powers thou hast given him*, so it is connected with the petition; or, *that thy Son may glorify thee according to the power given him*, so it is connected with the plea. Now see here the power of the Mediator.

a. The origin of his power: *Thou hast given him power*; he has it from God, to whom all power belongs. Man, in his fallen state, must, in order to his recovery, be taken under a new model of government, which could not be erected but by a special commission under the broad seal of heaven, directed to the undertaker of that glorious work, and constituting him sole arbitrator of the grand difference that was, and sole guarantee of the grand alliance that was to be, between God and man; so as to this office, he received his power, which was to be executed in a way distinct from his power and government as Creator. Note, The church's king is no usurper, as the prince of this world is; Christ's right to rule is incontestable.

b. The extent of his power: He has power over all flesh. (a.) Over all mankind. He has power in and over the world of spirits, the powers of the upper and unseen world are subject to him (1 Peter iii. 22); but, being now mediating between God and man, he here pleads his power over all flesh. They were men whom he was to subdue and save; out of that race he had a remnant given him, and therefore all that rank of beings was put under his feet. (b.) Over mankind considered as corrupt and fallen, for so he is called flesh, Gen. vi. 3. If he had not in this sense been flesh, he had not needed a Redeemer. Over this sinful race the Lord Jesus has all power; and all judgment, concerning them, is committed to him; power to bind or loose, acquit or condemn; power on earth to forgive sins or not. Christ, as Mediator, has the government of the whole world put into his hand; he is king of nations, has power even over those that know him not, nor obey his gospel; whom he does not rule, he over-rules, Ps. xxii. 28; lxii. 8; Matt. xxviii. 18; ch. iii. 35.

c. The grand intention and design of this power: *That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*. Here is the mystery of our salvation laid open.

(a.) Here is the Father making over the elect to the Redeemer, and giving them to him as his charge and trust; as the crown and recompence of his undertaking. He has a sovereign power over all the fallen race, but a peculiar interest in the chosen remnant; all things were put under his feet, but they were delivered into his hand.

(b.) Here is the Son undertaking to secure the happiness of those that were given him, that he would give eternal life to them. See how great the authority of the Redeemer is. He has lives and crowns to give, eternal lives that never die, immortal crowns that never fade. Now consider how great the Lord Jesus is, who has such preferments in his gift; and how gracious he is in giving eternal life to those whom he undertakes to save. [a.] He sanctifies them in this world, gives them the spiritual life which is eternal



life in the bud and embryo, *ch. iv. 14.* Grace in the soul is heaven in that soul. [b.] He will glorify them in the other world; their happiness shall be completed in the vision and fruition of God. This only is mentioned, because it supposes all the other parts of his undertaking, teaching them, satisfying for them, sanctifying them, and preparing them for that eternal life; and indeed all the other were in order to this; we are called to his kingdom and glory, and begotten to the inheritance. What is last in execution was first in intention, and that is eternal life.

(c.) Here is the subserviency of the Redeemer's universal dominion to this: He has power over all flesh, on purpose that he might give eternal life to the select number. Note, Christ's dominion over the children of men is in order to the salvation of the children of God: *All things are for their sakes*, 2 Cor. iv. 15. All Christ's laws, ordinances, and promises, which are given to all, are designed effectually to convey spiritual life, and secure eternal life, to all that were given to Christ; he is head over all things to the church. The administration of the kingdoms of providence and grace are put into the same hand, that all things may be made to concur for good to the called.

d. Here is a further explication of this grand design (v. 3): "*This is life eternal*, which I am empowered and have undertaken to give, this is the nature of it, and this the way leading to it, to know thee the only true God, and all the discoveries and principles of natural religion, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, as Mediator, and the doctrines and laws of that holy religion which he instituted for the recovery of man out of his lapsed state." Here is,

(a.) The great end which the Christian religion sets before us, and that is, eternal life, the happiness of an immortal soul in the vision and fruition of an eternal God. This he was to reveal to all, and secure to all that were given him. By the gospel life and immortality are brought to light, are brought to hand, a life which transcends this as much in excellency as it does in duration.

(b.) The sure way of attaining this blessed end, which is, by the right knowledge of God and Jesus Christ: "*This is life eternal*, to know thee, which may be taken two ways:—[a.] Life eternal lies in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ; the present principle of this life is the believing knowledge of God and Christ; the future perfection of that life will be the intuitive knowledge of God and Christ. Those that are brought into union with Christ, and live a life of communion with God in Christ, know, in some measure, by experience, what eternal life is, and will say, "If this be heaven, heaven is sweet." See Ps. xvii. 15. [b.] The knowledge of God and Christ leads to life eternal; this is the way in which Christ

gives eternal life, by the knowledge of him that has called us (2 Peter i. 3), and ths is the way in which we come to receive it. The Christian religion shows us the way to heaven, *First*, By directing us to God, as the author and felicity of our being; for Christ died to bring us to God. To know him as our Creator, and to love him, obey him, submit to him, and trust in him, as our owner, ruler; and benefactor,—to devote ourselves to him as our sovereign Lord, depend upon him as our chief good, and direct all to his praise as our highest end,—*this is life eternal*. God is here called the only true God, to distinguish him from the false gods of the heathen, which were counterfeits and pretenders, not from the person of the Son, of whom it is expressly said that he is the true God and eternal life (1 John v. 20), and who in this text is proposed as the object of the same religious regard with the Father. It is certain there is but one only living and true God, and the God we adore is he. He is the true God, and not a mere name or notion; the only true God, and all that ever set up as rivals with him are vanity and a lie; the service of him is the only true religion. *Secondly*, By directing us to Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and man: *Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*. If man had continued innocent, the knowledge of the only true God would have been life eternal to him; but now that he is fallen there must be something more; now that we are under guilt, to know God is to know him as a righteous Judge, whose curse we are under; and nothing is more killing than to know this. We are therefore concerned to know Christ as our Redeemer, by whom alone we can now have access to God; it is life eternal to believe in Christ; and this he has undertaken to give to as many as were given him. See *ch. vi. 39, 40.* Those that are acquainted with God and Christ are already in the suburbs of life eternal.

(2.) Christ here prays to be glorified in consideration of his having glorified the Father hitherto, v. 4, 5. The meaning of the former petition was, *Glorify me in this world*; the meaning of the latter is, *Glorify me in the other world. I have glorified thee on the earth, and now glorify thou me*. Observe here,

[1.] With what comfort Christ reflects on the life he had lived on earth: *I have glorified thee, and finished my work*; it is as good as finished. He does not complain of the poverty and disgrace he had lived in, what a weary life he had upon earth, as ever any man of sorrows had. He overlooks this, and pleases himself in reviewing the service he had done his Father, and the progress he had made in his undertaking. This is here recorded, *First*, For the honour of Christ, that his life upon earth did in all respects fully answer the end of his coming into the world. Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus had work given him to do by him that sent him; he came



not into the world to live at ease, but to go about doing good, and to fulfil all righteousness. His Father gave him his work, his work in the vineyard, both appointed him to it and assisted him in it. 2. *The work that was given him to do he finished.* Though he had not, as yet, gone through the last part of his undertaking, yet he was so near being made perfect through sufferings that he might say, I have finished it; it was as good as done, he was giving it its finishing stroke, *ἔτελειώσα—I have finished.* The word signifies his performing every part of his undertaking in the most complete and perfect manner. 3. Herein he glorified his Father; he pleased him, he praised him. It is the glory of God that *his work is perfect*, and the same is the glory of the Redeemer; what he is the author of he will be the finisher of. It was a strange way for the Son to glorify the Father by abasing himself (this looked more likely to disparage him), yet it was contrived that so he should glorify him: "*I have glorified thee on the earth, in such a way as men on earth could bear the manifestation of thy glory.*" Secondly, It is recorded for example to all, *that we may follow his example.* 1. We must make it our business to do the work God has appointed us to do, according to our capacity and the sphere of our activity; we must each of us do all the good we can in this world. 2. We must aim at the glory of God in all. We must glorify him on the earth, which he has given unto the children of men, demanding only this quit-rent; on the earth, where we are in a state of probation and preparation for eternity. 3. We must persevere herein to the end of our days; we must not sit down till we have finished our work, and accomplished as a hireling our day. Thirdly, It is recorded for encouragement to all those that rest upon him. If he has finished the work that was given him to do, then he is a complete Saviour, and did not do his work by the halves. And he that finished his work for us will finish it in us to the day of Christ.

[2.] See with what confidence he expects the joy set before him (v. 5): *Now, O Father, glorify thou me.* It is what he depends upon, and cannot be denied him.

First, See here what he prayed for: *Glorify thou me, as before, v. 1.* All repetitions in prayer are not to be counted vain repetitions; Christ prayed, saying the same words (Matt. xxvi. 44), and yet prayed more earnestly. What his Father had promised him, and he was assured of, yet he must pray for; promises are not designed to supersede prayers, but to be the guide of our desires and the ground of our hopes. Christ's being glorified includes all the honours, powers, and joys, of his exalted state. See how it is described.

1. It is a glory with God; not only, *Glorify my name on earth*, but, *Glorify me with thine own self.* It was paradise, to be heaven, to be with his Father, as Prov. viii. 30; Dan. vii. 13; Heb. viii. 1. Note, The brightest glories

of the exalted Redeemer were to be displayed within the veil, where the Father manifests his glory. The praises of the upper world are offered up to him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb in conjunction (Rev. v. 13), and the prayers of the lower world draw out grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ in conjunction; and thus the Father has glorified him with himself. 2. It is the glory he had with God before the world was. By this it appears, (1.) That Jesus Christ, as God, had a being before the world was, co-eternal with the Father; our religion acquaints us with one that was before all things, and by whom all things consist. (2.) That his glory with the Father is from everlasting, as well as his existence with the Father; for he was from eternity the brightness of his Father's glory, Heb. i. 3. As God's making the world only declared his glory, but made no real additions to it; so Christ undertook the work of redemption, not because he needed glory, for he had a glory with the Father before the world, but because we needed glory. (3.) That Jesus Christ in his state of humiliation divested himself of this glory, and drew a veil over it; though he was still God, yet he was God manifested in the flesh, not in his glory. He laid down this glory for a time, as a pledge that he would go through with his undertaking, according to the appointment of his Father. (4.) That in his exalted state he resumed this glory, and clad himself again with his former robes of light. Having performed his undertaking, he did, as it were, *repscere pignus—take up his pledge*, by this demand, *Glorify thou me.* He prays that even his human nature might be advanced to the highest honour it was capable of, his body a glorious body; and that the glory of the Godhead might now be manifested in the person of the Mediator, Emmanuel, God-man. He does not pray to be glorified with the princes and great men of the earth: no; he that knew both worlds, and might choose which he would have his preferment in, chose it in the glory of the other world, as far exceeding all the glory of this. He had despised the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, when Satan offered them to him, and therefore might the more boldly claim the glories of the other world. *Let the same mind be in us.* "Lord, give the glories of this world to whom thou wilt give them, but let me have my portion of glory in the world to come. It is no matter, though I be vilified with men; but, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self."

Secondly, See here what he pleaded: *I have glorified thee*; and now, in consideration thereof, *glorify thou me.* For, 1 There was an equity in it, and an admirable becomingness, that, if God was glorified in him, he should glorify him in himself, as he had observed, ch. xiii. 32. Such an infinite value there was in what Christ did



to glorify his Father that he properly merited all the glories of his exalted state. If the Father was a gainer in his glory by the Son's humiliation, it was fit the Son should be no loser by it, at long run, in his glory. 2. It was according to the covenant between them, that if the Son would *make his soul an offering for sin* he should *divide the spoil with the strong* (Isa. liii. 10, 12), and *the kingdom should be his*; and this he had an eye to, and depended upon, in his sufferings; it was *for the joy set before him* that he *endured the cross*: and now in his exalted state he still expects the completing of his exaltation, because he perfected his undertaking, Heb. x. 13. 3. It was the most proper evidence of his Father's accepting and approving the work he had finished. By the glorifying of Christ we are satisfied that God was satisfied, and therein a real demonstration was given that his Father was well pleased in him as his beloved Son. 4. Thus we must be taught that those, and only those, who glorify God on earth, and persevere in the work God hath given them to do, shall be glorified with the Father, when they must be no more in this world. Not that we can merit that glory, as Christ did, but our glorifying God is required as an evidence of our interest in Christ, through whom eternal life is God's free gift.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

Christ, having prayed for himself, comes next to pray for those that are his, and he knew them by name, though he did not here name them. Now observe here,

I. Whom he did not pray for (v. 9): *I pray not for the world*. Note, There is a world of people that Jesus Christ did not pray for. It is not meant of the world of mankind in general (he prays for that here, v. 21, *That the world may believe that thou hast sent me*); nor is it meant of the Gentiles, in distinction from the Jews; but the world is here opposed to the elect, who are given to Christ out of the world. Take the world for a heap of unwinnowed corn in the floor, and

God loves it, Christ prays for it, and dies for it, *for a blessing is in it*; but, *the Lord perfectly knowing those that are his*, he eyes particularly those *that were given him out of the world*, extracts them; and then take the world for the remaining heap of rejected, worthless chaff, and Christ neither prays for it, nor dies for it, but abandons it, and *the wind drives it away*. These are called *the world*, because they are governed by the spirit of this world, and have their portion in it; for these Christ does not pray; not but that there are some things which he intercedes with God for on their behalf, as the dresser for the reprieve of the barren tree; but he does not pray for them in this prayer, they *have no part nor lot* in the blessings here prayed for. He does not say, I pray against the world, as Elias made intercession against Israel; but, *I pray not for them*, I pass them by, and leave them to themselves; they are *not written in the Lamb's book of life*, and therefore not in the breast-plate of the great high-priest. And miserable is the condition of such, as it was of those whom the prophet was forbidden to pray for, and more so, Jer. vii. 16. We that know not who are chosen, and who are passed by, must *pray for all men*, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 4. While there is life, there is hope, and room for prayer. See 1 Sam. xii. 23.

II. Whom he did pray for; not for angels, but for the children of men. 1. He prays *for those that were given him*, meaning primarily the disciples that had attended him in the regeneration; but it is doubtless to be extended further, to all who come under the same character, who receive and believe the words of Christ, v. 6, 8. 2. He prays *for all that should believe on him* (v. 20), and it is not only the petitions that follow, but those also which went before, that must be construed to extend to all believers, in every place and every age; for he has a concern for them all, and calls *things that are not as though they were*.

III. What encouragement he had to pray for them, and what are the general pleas with which he introduces his petitions for them, and recommends them to his Father's favour; they are five:—

1. The charge he had received concerning them: *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me* (v. 6), and again (v. 9), *Those whom thou hast given me*. "Father, those I am now praying for are such as thou hast entrusted me with, and what I have to say for them is in pursuance of the charge I have received concerning them." Now,

(1.) This is meant primarily of the disciples that then were, who were given to Christ as his pupils to be educated by him while he was on earth, and his agents to be employed for him when he went to heaven. They were given him to be the learners of his doctrine, the witnesses of his life and miracles, and the monuments of his grace and favour, in

order to their being the publishers of his gospel and the planters of his church. When they left all to follow him, this was the secret spring of that strange resolution: they were given to him, else they had not given themselves to him. Note, The apostleship and ministry, which are Christ's gift to the church, were first the Father's gift to Jesus Christ. As under the law the Levites were given to Aaron (Num. iii. 9), to him (the great high-priest of our profession) the Father gave the apostles first, and ministers in every age, to keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation, and to do the service of the tabernacle. See Eph. iv. 8, 11; Ps. lxxviii. 18. Christ received this gift for men, that he might give it to men. As this puts a great honour upon the ministry of the gospel, and magnifies that office, which is so much vilified; so it lays a mighty obligation upon the ministers of the gospel to devote themselves entirely to Christ's service, as being given to him.

(2.) But it is designed to extend to all the elect, for they are elsewhere said to be given to Christ (ch. vi. 37, 39), and he often laid a stress upon this, that those he was to save were given to him as his charge; to his care they were committed, from his hand they were expected, and concerning them he received commandments. He here shows,

[1.] That the Father had authority to give them: *Thine they were*. He did not give that which was none of his own, but covenanted that he had a good title. The elect, whom the Father gave to Christ, were his own in three ways:—*First*, They were creatures, and their lives and beings were derived from him. When they were given to Christ to be *vessels of honour*, they were *in his hand, as clay in the hand of the potter*, to be disposed of as God's wisdom saw most for God's glory. *Secondly*, They were criminals, and their lives and beings were forfeited to him. It was a remnant of fallen mankind that was given to Christ to be redeemed, that might have been made sacrifices to justice when they were pitched upon to be the *monuments of mercy*: might justly have been *delivered to the tormentors* when they were delivered to the Saviour. *Thirdly*, They were chosen, and their lives and beings were designed, for him; they were set apart for God, and were consigned to Christ as his agent. 'This he insists upon again (v. 7): *All things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee*, which, though it may take in all that appertained to his office as Mediator, yet seems especially to be meant of those that were given him. "*They are of thee*, their being is of thee as the God of nature, their well-being is of thee as the God of grace; they are *all of thee*, and therefore, Father, I bring them all to thee, that they may be all for thee."

[2.] That he did accordingly give them to the Son: *Thou gavest them to me*, as sheep to the shepherd, to be kept; as patients to the

physician, to be cured; children to a tutor, to be educated; thus he will deliver up his charge (Heb. ii. 13), *The children thou hast given me*. They were delivered to Christ: *First*, That the election of grace might not be frustrated, *that not one, no not of the little ones, might perish*. That great concern must be lodged in some one good hand, able to give sufficient security, *that the purpose of God according to election might stand*. *Secondly*, That the undertaking of Christ might not be fruitless; they were given to him as his seed, in whom he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied (Isa. liii. 10, 11), and might not spend his strength, and shed his blood, *for nought, and in vain*, Isa. xlix. 4. We may plead, as Christ does, "Lord, keep my graces, keep my comforts, for *thine they were, and thou gavest them to me*."

2. The care he had taken of them to teach them (v. 6): *I have manifested thy name to them*. *I have given to them the words which thou gavest to me*, v. 8. Observe here,

(1.) The great design of Christ's doctrine, which was to manifest God's name, to declare him (ch. i. 18), to instruct the ignorant, and rectify the mistakes of a dark and foolish world concerning God, that he might be better loved and worshipped.

(2.) His faithful discharge of this undertaking: *I have done it*. His fidelity appears, [1.] In the truth of his doctrine. It agreed exactly with the instructions he received from his Father. He gave not only the things but the very words, *that were given him*. Ministers, in wording their message, must have an eye to the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. [2.] In the tendency of his doctrine, which was to manifest God's name. He did not seek himself, but, in all he did and said, aimed to magnify his Father. Note, *First*, It is Christ's prerogative to manifest God's name to the souls of the children of men. *No man knows the Father, but he to whom the Son will reveal him*, Matt. xi. 27. He only has acquaintance with the Father, and so is able to open the truth; and he only has access to the spirits of men, and so is able to open the understanding. Ministers may publish the name of the Lord (as Moses, Deut. xxxii. 3), but Christ only can manifest that name. By the word of Christ God is revealed to us; by the Spirit of Christ God is revealed in us. Ministers may speak the words of God to us, but Christ can give us his words, can put them in us, as food, as treasure. *Secondly*, Sooner or later, Christ will manifest God's name to all that were given him, and will give them his word, to be the seed of their new birth, the support of their spiritual life, and the earnest of their everlasting bliss.

3. The good effect of the care he had taken of them, and the pains he had taken with them (v. 6): *They have kept thy word* (v. 7), *they have known that all things are of thee* (v. 8); *they have received thy words*, and em-



braced them, have given their assent and consent to them, *and have known surely that I came out from thee, and have believed that thou didst send me.* Observe here,

(1.) What success the doctrine of Christ had among those *that were given to him*, in several particulars:—

[1.] “They have received the words which I gave them, as the ground receives the seed, and the earth drinks in the rain.” They attended to the words of Christ, apprehended in some measure the meaning of them, and were affected with them: they received the impression of them. The word was to them an *ingrafted word*.

[2.] “*They have kept thy word*, have continued in it; they have conformed to it.” Christ’s commandment is then only kept when it is obeyed. Those that have to teach others the commands of Christ ought to be themselves observant of them. It was requisite that these should *keep what was committed to them*, for it was to be transmitted by them to every place for every age.

[3.] “They have understood the word, and have been sensible on what ground they went in receiving and keeping it. They have been aware that thou art the original author of that holy religion which I am come to institute, *that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.*” All Christ’s offices and powers, all the gifts of the Spirit, all his graces and comforts, which God *gave without measure to him*, were all from God, contrived by his wisdom, appointed by his will, and designed by his grace, for his own glory in man’s salvation. Note, It is a great satisfaction to us, in our reliance upon Christ, that he, and all he is and has, all he said and did, all he is doing and will do, are of God, 1 Cor. i. 30. We may therefore venture our souls upon Christ’s mediation, for it has a good bottom. If the righteousness be of God’s appointing, we shall be justified; if the grace be of his dispensing, we shall be sanctified.

[4.] They have set their seal to it: *They have known surely that I came out from God*, v. 8. See here, *First*, What it is to believe; it is to *know surely*, to know *that it is so of a truth*. The disciples were very weak and defective in knowledge; yet Christ, who knew them better than they knew themselves, passes his word for them that they did believe. Note, We may know surely that which we neither do nor can know fully; may *know the certainty of the things which are not seen*, though we cannot particularly describe the nature of them. *We walk by faith*, which knows surely, not yet by sight, which knows clearly. *Secondly*, What it is we are to believe: *that Jesus Christ came out from God*, as he is the Son of God, in his person *the image of the invisible God*, and that God did send him; that in his undertaking he is the ambassador of the eternal king: so that the Christian religion stands

upon the same footing, and is of equal authority, with natural religion; and therefore all the doctrines of Christ are to be received as divine truths; all his commands obeyed as divine laws, and all his promises depended upon as divine securities.

(2.) How Jesus Christ here speaks of this: he enlarges upon it, [1.] As pleased with it himself. Though the many instances of his disciples’ dulness and weakness had grieved him, yet their constant adherence to him, their gradual improvements, and their great attainments at last, were his joy. Christ is a Master that delights in the proficiency of his scholars. He accepts the sincerity of their faith, and graciously passes by the infirmity of it. See how willing he is to make the best of us, and to say the best of us, thereby encouraging our faith in him, and teaching us charity to one another. [2.] As pleading it with his Father. He is praying for those *that were given to him*; and he pleads that they had given themselves to him. Note, The due improvement of grace received is a good plea, according to the tenour of the new covenant, for further grace; for so runs the promise, *To him that hath shall be given*. Those that keep Christ’s word, and believe on him, let Christ alone to commend them, and, which is more, to recommend them to his Father.

4. He pleads the Father’s own interest in them (v. 9): *I pray for them, for they are thine*; and this by virtue of a joint and mutual interest, which he and the Father have in what pertained to each: *All mine are thine, and thine are mine*. Between the Father and Son there can be no dispute (as there is among the children of men) about *meum and tuum*—*mine and thine*, for the matter was settled from eternity; *all mine are thine, and thine are mine*. Here is,

(1.) The plea particularly urged for his disciples: *They are thine*. The consigning of the elect to Christ was so far from making them less the Father’s that it was in order to making them the more so. Note, [1.] All that receive Christ’s word, and believe in him, are taken into covenant-relation to the Father, and are looked upon as his; Christ presents them to him, and they, through Christ, present themselves to him. Christ has *redeemed us*, not to himself only, but *to God, by his blood*, Rev. v. 9, 10. They are *first-fruits unto God*, Rev. xiv. 4. [2.] This is a good plea in prayer, Christ here pleads it, *They are thine*; we may plead it for ourselves, *I am thine, save me*; and for others (as Moses, Exod. xxxii. 11), “*They are thy people. They are thine*; wilt thou not provide for thine own? Wilt thou not secure them, that they may not be run down by the devil and the world? Wilt thou not secure thy interest in them, that they may not depart from thee? *They are thine*, own them as thine.”

(2.) The foundation on which this plea is



grounded: *All mine are thine, and thine are mine.* This speaks the Father and Son to be, [1.] One in essence. Every creature must say to God, *All mine are thine*; but none can say to him, *All thine are mine*, but he that is the same in substance with him, and equal in power and glory. [2.] One in interest; no separate or divided interests between them. *First*, What the Father has as Creator is delivered over to the Son, to be used and disposed of in subserviency to his great undertaking. *All things are delivered to him* (Matt. xi. 27); the grant is so general that nothing is excepted but *he that did put all things under him.* *Secondly*, What the Son has as Redeemer is designed for the Father, and his kingdom shall shortly be delivered up to him. All the benefits of redemption, purchased by the Son, are intended for the Father's praise, and in his glory all the lines of his undertaking centre: *All mine are thine.* The Son owns none for his that are not devoted to the service of the Father; nor will any thing be accepted as a piece of service to the Christian religion which clashes with the dictates and laws of natural religion. In a limited sense, every true believer may say, *All thine are mine*; if God be ours in covenant, all he is and has is so far ours that it shall be engaged for our good; and in an unlimited sense every true believer does say, Lord, *all mine are thine*; all laid at his feet, to be serviceable to him. And what we have may be comfortably committed to God's care and blessing when it is cheerfully submitted to his government and disposal: "Lord, take care of what I have, for it is *all thine.*"

5. He pleads his own concern in them: *I am glorified in them—ἐδόξασμαι.* (1.) *I have been glorified in them.* What little honour Christ had in this world was among his disciples; he had been glorified by their attendance on him and obedience to him, their preaching and working miracles in his name; and therefore *I pray for them.* Note, Those shall have an interest in Christ's intercession in and by whom he is glorified. (2.) "*I am to be glorified in them, when I am gone to heaven; they are to bear up my name.*" The apostles preached and wrought miracles in *Christ's name*; the Spirit in them glorified Christ (ch. xvi. 14): "*I am glorified in them, and therefore,*" [1.] "*I concern myself for them.*" What little interest Christ has in this degenerate world lies in his church; and therefore it and all its affairs lie near his heart, within the veil. [2.] "Therefore I commit them to the Father, who has engaged to glorify the Son, and, upon this account, will have a gracious eye to those in whom he is glorified." That in which God and Christ are glorified may, with humble confidence, be committed to God's special care.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world.

and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

After the general pleas with which Christ recommended his disciples to his Father's care follow the particular petitions he puts up for them; and, 1. They all relate to spiritual blessings in heavenly things. He does not pray that they might be rich and great in the world, that they might raise estates and get preferments, but that they might be kept from sin, and furnished for their duty, and brought safely to heaven. Note, The prosperity of the soul is the best prosperity; for what relates to this Christ came to purchase and bestow, and so teaches us to seek, in the first place, both for others and for ourselves. 2. They are such blessings as were suited to their present state and case, and their various exigencies and occasions. Note, Christ's intercession is always pertinent. Our *advocate with the Father* is acquainted with all the particulars of our wants and burdens, our dangers and difficulties, and knows how to accommodate his intercession to each, as to Peter's peril, which he himself was not aware of (Luke xxii. 32), *I have prayed for thee.* 3. He is large and full in the petitions, orders them before his Father, and *fills his mouth with arguments*, to teach us fervency and importunity in prayer, to be large in prayer, and dwell upon our errands at the throne of grace, wrestling as Jacob, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*

Now the first thing Christ prays for, for his disciples, is their preservation, in these verses, in order to which he commits them all to his Father's custody. Keeping supposes danger, and their danger arose from the world, the world wherein they were, the evil of this he begs they might be kept from. Now observe,

I. The request itself: *Keep them from the*



world. There were two ways of their being delivered from the world :—

1. By taking them out of it; and he does not pray that they might be so delivered: *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world; that is,*

(1.) "I pray not that they may be speedily removed by death" If the world will be vexatious to them, the readiest way to secure them would be to hasten them out of it to a better world, that will give them better treatment. Send chariots and horses of fire for them, to fetch them to heaven; Job, Elijah, Jonah, Moses, when that occurred which fretted them, prayed that they might be *taken out of the world*; but Christ would not pray so for his disciples, for two reasons:—[1.] Because he came to conquer, not to countenance, those intemperate heats and passions which make men impatient of life, and importunate for death. It is his will that we should take up our cross, and not outrun it. [2.] Because he had work for them to do in the world; the world, though sick of them (Acts xxii. 22), and therefore not worthy of them (Heb. xi. 38), yet could ill spare them. In pity therefore to this dark world, Christ would not have these lights removed out of it, but continued in it, especially for the sake of those in the world that were to *believe in him through their word*. Let not them be taken out of the world when their Master is; they must each in his own order die a martyr, but not till they have finished their testimony. Note, *First*, The taking of good people out of the world is a thing by no means to be desired, but rather dreaded and laid to heart, Isa. lvii. 1. *Secondly*, Though Christ loves his disciples, he does not presently send for them to heaven, as soon as they are effectually called, but leaves them for some time in this world, that they may do good and glorify God upon earth, and be ripened for heaven. Many good people are spared to live, because they can ill be spared to die.

(2.) "I pray not that they may be totally freed and exempted from the troubles of this world, and taken out of the toil and terror of it into some place of ease and safety, there to live undisturbed; this is not the preservation I desire for them." *Non ut omni molestia liberati otium et delicias colant, sed ut inter media pericula salvi tamen maneant Dei auxilio*—Not that, being freed from all trouble, they may bask in luxurious ease, but that by the help of God they may be preserved in a scene of danger; so Calvin. Not that they may be kept from all conflict with the world, but that they may not be overcome by it; not that, as Jeremiah wished, they might leave their people, and go from them (Jer. ix. 2), but that, like Ezekiel, their faces may be strong against the faces of wicked men, Ezek. iii. 8. It is more the honour of a Christian soldier by faith to overcome the world than by a monastical vow to retreat

from it; and more for the honour of Christ to serve him in a city than to serve him in a cell.

2. Another way is by keeping them from the corruption that is in the world; and he prays they may be thus kept, v. 11, 15. Here are three branches of this petition:—

(1.) *Holy Father, keep those whom thou hast given me.*

[1.] Christ was now leaving them; but let them not think that their defence was departed from them; no, he does here, in their hearing, commit them to the custody of his Father and their Father. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of all believers that Christ himself has committed them to the care of God. Those cannot but be safe whom the almighty God keeps, and he cannot but keep those whom the Son of his love commits to him, in the virtue of which we may by faith *commit the keeping of our souls to God*, 1 Pet. iv. 19; 2 Tim. i. 12. *First*, He here puts them under the divine protection, that they may not be run down by the malice of their enemies; that they and all their concerns may be the particular care of the divine Providence: "Keep their lives, till they have done their work; keep their comforts, and let them not be broken in upon by the hardships they meet with; keep up their interest in the world, and let it not sink." To this prayer is owing the wonderful preservation of the gospel ministry and gospel church in the world unto this day; if God had not graciously kept both, and kept up both, they had been extinguished and lost long ago. *Secondly*, He puts them under the divine tuition, that they may not themselves run away from their duty, nor be led aside by the treachery of their own hearts. "Keep them in their integrity, keep them disciples, keep them close to their duty." We need God's power not only to put us into a state of grace, but to keep us in it. See, *ch. x. 28, 29*; 1 Pet. i. 5.

[2.] The titles he gives to him he prays to, and them he prays for, enforce the petition. *First*, He speaks to God as a *holy Father*. In committing ourselves and others to the divine care, we may take encouragement, 1. From the attribute of his holiness, for this is engaged for the preservation of his holy ones; he hath sworn by his holiness, Ps. lxxxix. 35. If he be a holy God and hate sin, he will make those holy that are his, and keep them from sin, which they also hate and dread as the greatest evil. 2. From this relation of a Father, wherein he stands to us through Christ. If he be a Father, he will take care of his own children, will teach them and keep them; who else should? *Secondly*, He speaks of them as those whom the Father had given him. What we receive as our Father's gifts, we may comfortably remit to our Father's care. "Father, keep the graces and comforts thou hast given me; the children thou hast given me; the ministry I have received."

(2.) *Keep them through thine own name.*

That is, [1.] Keep them for thy name's sake; so some. "Thy name and honour are concerned in their preservation as well as mine, for both will suffer by it if they either revolt or sink." The Old Testament saints often pleaded, for *thy name's sake*; and those may with comfort plead it that are indeed more concerned for the honour of God's name than for any interest of their own. [2.] Keep them in thy name; so others; the original is so, *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι*. "Keep them in the knowledge and fear of thy name; keep them in the profession and service of thy name, whatever it cost them. Keep them in the interest of thy name, and let them ever be faithful to this; keep them in thy truths, in thine ordinances, in the way of thy commandments." [3.] Keep them by or through thy name; so others. "Keep them by thine own power, in thine own hand; keep them thyself, undertake for them, let them be thine own immediate care. Keep them by those means of preservation which thou hast thyself appointed, and by which thou hast made thyself known. Keep them by thy word and ordinances; let thy name be their strong tower, thy tabernacle their pavilion."

(3.) *Keep them from the evil*, or out of the evil. He had taught them to pray daily, *Deliver us from evil*, and this would encourage them to pray. [1.] "Keep them from the evil one, the devil and all his instruments; that wicked one and all his children. Keep them from Satan as a tempter, that either he may not have leave to sift them, or that their faith may not fail. Keep them from him as a destroyer, that he may not drive them to despair." [2.] "Keep them from the evil thing, that is, sin; from every thing that looks like it, or leads to it. Keep them, that they do no evil," 2 Cor. xiii. 7. Sin is that evil which, above any other, we should dread and deprecate. [3.] "Keep them from the evil of the world, and of their tribulation in it, so that it may have no sting in it, no malignity;" not that they might be kept from affliction, but kept through it, that the property of their afflictions might be so altered as that there might be no evil in them, nothing to do them any harm.

II. The reasons with which he enforces these requests for their preservation, which are five:—

1. He pleads that hitherto he had kept them (v. 12): "*While I was with them in the world, I have kept them in thy name*, in the true faith of the gospel and the service of God; those that thou gavest me for my constant attendants I have kept, they are all safe, and none of them missing, none of them revolted nor ruined, *but the son of perdition*; he is lost, that the scripture might be fulfilled." Observe,

(1.) Christ's faithful discharge of his undertaking concerning his disciples: *While he was with them, he kept them*, and his care con-

cerning them was not in vain. He kept them in God's name, preserved them from falling into any dangerous errors or sins, from striking in with the Pharisees, who would have compassed sea and land to make proselytes of them; he kept them from deserting him, and returning to the little all they had left for him; he had them still under his eye and care when he sent them to preach; *went not his heart with them?* Many that followed him awhile took offence at something or other, and went off; but he kept the twelve that they should not go away. He kept them from falling into the hands of persecuting enemies that sought their lives; kept them when he surrendered himself, *ch. xviii. 9. While he was with them*, he kept them in a visible manner by instructions still sounding in their ears, miracles still done before their eyes; when he was gone from them, they must be kept in a more spiritual manner. Sensible comforts and supports are sometimes given and sometimes withheld; but, when they are withdrawn, yet they are not left comfortless. What Christ here says of his immediate followers is true of all the saints while they are here in this world; Christ keeps them *in God's name*. It is implied, [1.] That they are weak, and cannot keep themselves; their own hands are not sufficient for them. [2.] That they are, in God's account, valuable and worth the keeping; precious in his sight and honourable; his treasure, his jewels. [3.] That their salvation is designed, for to this it is that they are kept, 1 Pet. i. 5. As the wicked are reserved for the day of evil, so the righteous are preserved for the day of bliss. [4.] That they are the charge of the Lord Jesus; for as his charge he keeps them, and exposed himself like the good shepherd for the preservation of the sheep.

(2.) The comfortable account he gives of his undertaking: *None of them is lost*. Note, Jesus Christ will certainly keep all that were given to him, so that none of them shall be totally and finally lost; they may think themselves lost, and may be nearly lost (in imminent peril); but it is the Father's will that he should lose none, and none he will lose (*ch. vi. 39*); so it will appear when they come all together, and none of them shall be wanting.

(3.) A brand put upon Judas, as none of those whom he had undertaken to keep. He was among those that were given to Christ, but not of them. He speaks of Judas as already lost, for he had abandoned the society of his Master and his fellow-disciples, and abandoned himself to the devil's guidance, and in a little time would go to his own place; he is as good as lost. But the apostasy and ruin of Judas were no reproach at all to his Master, or his family; for, [1.] He was *the son of perdition*, and therefore not one of those that were given to Christ to be kept. He deserved perdition, and God left him to throw himself headlong into it. He was *the son of the destroyer*, as Cain, who was of that wicked



one. That great enemy whom the Lord *will consume* is called a *son of perdition*, because he is a *man of sin*, 2 Thess. ii. 3. It is an awful consideration that one of the apostles proved a son of perdition. No man's place or name in the church, no man's privileges or opportunities of getting grace, no man's profession or external performances, will secure him from ruin, if his heart be not right with God; nor are any more likely to prove sons of perdition at last, after a plausible course of profession, than those that like Judas love the bag; but Christ's distinguishing Judas from those that were given him (for *ei mi*) is adversative, not exceptive) intimates that the truth and true religion ought not to suffer for the treachery of those that are false to it, 1 John ii. 19. [2.] The scripture was fulfilled; the sin of Judas was foreseen of God's counsel and foretold in his word, and the event would certainly follow after the prediction as a consequent, though it cannot be said necessarily to follow from it as an effect. See Ps. xli. 9; lxix. 25; cix. 8. We should be amazed at the treachery of apostates, were we not *told of it before*.

2. He pleads that he was now under a necessity of leaving them, and could no longer watch over them in the way that he had hitherto done (v. 11): "Keep them now, that I may not lose the labour I bestowed upon them while I was with them. Keep them, *that they may be one with us as we are with each other*." We shall have occasion to speak of this, v. 21. But see here,

(1.) With what pleasure he speaks of his own departure. He expresses himself concerning it with an air of triumph and exultation, with reference both to the world he left and the world he removed to. [1.] "*Now I am no more in the world*." Now farewell to this provoking troublesome world. I have had enough of it, and now the welcome hour is at hand when I shall be *no more in it*. Now that I have finished the work I had to do in it, I have done with it; nothing remains now but to hasten out of it as fast as I can." Note, It should be a pleasure to those that have their home in the other world to think of being *no more in this world*; for when we have done what we have to do in this world, and are made meet for that, what is there here that should court our stay? When we receive a sentence of death within ourselves, with what a holy triumph should we say, "*Now I am no more in this world*, this dark deceitful world, this poor empty world, this tempting defiling world; no more vexed with its thorns and briars, no more endangered by its nets and snares; now I shall wander no more in this howling wilderness, be tossed no more on this stormy sea; *now I am no more in this world*, but can cheerfully quit it, and give it a final farewell." [2.] "*Now I come to thee*." To get clear of the world is but the one half of the comfort of a dying Christ, of a dying Christian; the far better half is to think

of going to the Father, to sit down in the immediate, uninterrupted, and everlasting enjoyment of him. Note, Those who love God cannot but be pleased to think of coming to him, though it be through the valley of the shadow of death. When we go, to be *absent from the body*, it is to be *present with the Lord*, like children fetched home from school to their father's house. "Now come I to thee whom I have chosen and served, and whom my soul thirsteth after; to thee the fountain of light and life, the crown and centre of bliss and joy; now my longings shall be satisfied, my hopes accomplished, my happiness completed, *for now come I to thee*."

(2.) With what a tender concern he speaks of those whom he left behind: "*But these are in the world*." I have found what an evil world it is, what will become of these dear little ones that must stay in it? *Holy Father, keep them*; they will want my presence, let them have thine. They have now more need than ever to be kept, for I am sending them out further into the world than they have yet ventured; they must *launch forth into the deep*, and have business to do in these great waters, and will be lost if thou do not keep them." Observe here, [1.] That, when our Lord Jesus was going to the Father, he carried with him a tender concern for *his own that are in the world*; and continued to compassionate them. He bears their names upon his breast-plate, nay, upon his heart, and has *graven them with the nails of his cross upon the palms of his hands*; and when he is out of their sight they are not out of his, much less out of his mind. We should have such a pity for those that are launching out into the world when we are got almost through it, and for those that are left behind in it when we are leaving it. [2.] That, when Christ would express the utmost need his disciples had of divine preservation, he only says, *They are in the world*; this bespeaks danger enough to those who are bound for heaven, whom a flattering world would divert and seduce, and a malignant world would hate and persecute.

3. He pleads what a satisfaction it would be to them to know themselves safe, and what a satisfaction it would be to him to see them easy: *I speak this, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves*, v. 13. Observe,

(1.) Christ earnestly desired the fulness of the joy of his disciples, for it is his will that they should rejoice evermore. He was leaving them in tears and troubles, and yet took effectual care to *fulfil their joy*. When they thought their joy in him was brought to an end, then was it advanced nearer to perfection than ever it had been, and they were fuller of it. We are here taught, [1.] To found our joy in Christ: "It is *my joy*, joy of my giving, or rather joy that I am the matter of." Christ is a Christian's joy, his chief joy. Joy in the world is withering with it; joy in Christ is everlasting, like him. [2.]

To build up our joy with diligence ; for it is the duty as well as privilege of all true believers ; no part of the Christian life is pressed upon us more earnestly, Phil. iii 1 ; iv. 4 [3.] To aim at the perfection of this joy, that we may have it fulfilled in us, for this Christ would have.

(2.) In order hereunto, he did thus solemnly commit them to his Father's care and keeping and took them for witnesses that he did so : *These things I speak in the world, while I am yet with them in the world.* His intercession in heaven for their preservation would have been as effectual in itself ; but saying this in the world would be a greater satisfaction and encouragement to them, and would enable them to *rejoice in tribulation.* Note, [1.] Christ has not only treasured up comforts for his people, in providing for their future welfare, but has given out comforts to them, and said that which will be for their present satisfaction. He here condescended in the presence of his disciples to publish his last will and testament, and (which many a testator is shy of) lets them know what legacies he had left them, and how well they were secured, that they might have strong consolation. [2.] Christ's intercession for us is enough to fulfil our joy in him ; nothing more effectual to silence all our fears and mistrusts, and to furnish us with strong consolation, than this, that he always appears in the presence of God for us ; therefore the apostle puts a *yea* rather upon this, Rom. viii. 34. And see Heb. vii. 25.

4. He pleads the ill usage they were likely to meet with in the world, for his sake (v. 14) : "*I have given them thy word to be published to the world, and they have received it, have believed it themselves, and accepted the trust of transmitting it to the world ; and therefore the world hath hated them, as also because they are not of the world, any more than I.*" Here we have,

(1.) The world's enmity to Christ's followers. While Christ was with them, though as yet they had given but little opposition to the world, yet it hates them, much more would it do so when by their more extensive preaching of the gospel they would *turn the world upside down.* "Father, stand their friend," says Christ, "for they are likely to have many enemies ; let them have thy love, for the world's hatred is entailed upon them. In the midst of those fiery darts, let them be compassed with thy favour as with a shield." It is God's honour to take part with the weaker side, and to help the helpless. *Lord, be merciful to them, for men would swallow them up.*

(2.) The reasons of this enmity, which strengthen the plea. [1.] It is implied that one reason is because they had received the word of God as it was sent them by the hand of Christ, when the greatest part of the world rejected it, and set themselves against those who were the preachers and professors of it. Note, Those that receive Christ's good will

and good word must expect the world's ill will and ill word. Gospel ministers have been in a particular manner hated by the world, because they call men out of the world, and separate them from it, and teach them not to conform to it, and so condemn the world. "*Father, keep them, for it is for thy sake that they are exposed ; they are sufferers for thee.*" Thus the psalmist pleads, *For thy sake I have borne reproach*, Ps. lxi. 7. Note, Those that keep the word of Christ's patience are entitled to special protection in the hour of temptation, Rev. iii. 10. That cause which makes a martyr may well make a joyful sufferer. [2.] Another reason is more express ; the world hates them, because they are *not of the world.* Those to whom the word of Christ comes in power are not of the world, for it has this effect upon all that receive it in the love of it that it weans them from the wealth of the world, and turns them against the wickedness of the world, and therefore the world bears them a grudge.

5. He pleads their conformity to himself in a holy non-conformity to the world (v. 16) : "*Father, keep them, for they are of my spirit and mind, they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" Those may in faith commit themselves to God's custody, (1.) Who are *as Christ was in this world*, and tread in his steps. God will love those that are like Christ. (2.) Who do not engage themselves in the world's interest, nor devote themselves to its service. Observe, [1.] That Jesus Christ was not of this world ; he never had been of it, and least of all now that he was upon the point of leaving it. This intimates, *First*, His state ; he was none of the world's favourites nor darlings, none of its princes nor grandees ; worldly possessions he had none, not even *where to lay his head* ; nor worldly power, he was no judge nor divider. *Secondly*, His Spirit ; he was perfectly dead to the world, the prince of this world had nothing in him, the things of this world were nothing to him ; not honour, for he *made himself of no reputation* ; not riches, for *for our sakes he became poor* ; not pleasures, for he *acquainted himself with grief.* See ch. viii. 23. [2.] That therefore true Christians are not of this world. The Spirit of Christ in them is opposite to the spirit of the world. *First*, It is their lot to be despised by the world ; they are not in favour with the world any more than their Master before them was. *Secondly*, It is their privilege to be delivered from the world ; as Abraham out of the land of his nativity. *Thirdly*, It is their duty and character to be dead to the world. Their most pleasing converse is, and should be, with another world, and their prevailing concern about the business of that world, not of this. Christ's disciples were weak, and had many infirmities ; yet this he could say for them, *They were not of the world, not of the earth, and therefore he recommends them to the care of Heaven.*



17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

The next thing he prayed for for them was that they might be sanctified; not only kept from evil, but made good.

I. Here is the petition (v. 17): *Sanctify them through thy truth, through thy word, for thy word is truth*; it is true—it is truth itself. He desires they may be sanctified,

1. As Christians. Father, make them holy, and this will be their preservation, 1 Thess. v. 23. Observe here,

(1.) The grace desired—sanctification. The disciples were sanctified, for they were not of the world; yet he prays, *Father, sanctify them*, that is, [1.] “Confirm the work of sanctification in them, strengthen their faith, inflame their good affections, rivet their good resolutions.” [2.] “Carry on that good work in them, and continue it; let the *light shine more and more*.” [3.] “Complete it, crown it with the perfection of holiness; sanctify them throughout and to the end.” Note, *First*, It is the prayer of Christ for all that are his that they may be sanctified; because he cannot for shame own them as his, either here or hereafter, either employ them in his work or present them to his Father, if they be not sanctified. *Secondly*, Those that through grace are sanctified have need to be sanctified more and more. Even disciples must pray for sanctifying grace; for, if he that was the author of the good work be not the finisher of it, we are undone. Not to go forward is to go backward; *he that is holy must be holy still*, more holy still, pressing forward, soaring upward, as those that have not attained. *Thirdly*, It is God that sanctifies as well as God that justifies, 2 Cor. v. 5. *Fourthly*, It is an encouragement to us, in our prayers for sanctifying grace, that it is what Christ intercedes for for us.

(2.) The means of conferring this grace—*through thy truth, thy word is truth*. Not that the Holy One of Israel is hereby limited to means, but in the *counsel of peace* among other things it was settled and agreed, [1.] That all needful truth should be comprised and summed up in the word of God. Divine revelation, as it now stands in the written word, is not only pure truth without mixture, out entire truth without deficiency. [2.] That this word of truth should be the outward and ordinary means of our sanctification; not of itself, for then it would always sanctify, but as the instrument which the Spirit commonly uses in beginning and carrying on that good work; it is the seed of the new birth (1 Pet. i. 23), and the food of the new life, 1 Pet. ii. 1—2.

2. As ministers. “*Sanctify them*, set them apart for thyself and service; let their call to the apostleship be ratified in heaven.” Prophets were said to be sanctified, Jer. i. 5. Priests and Levites were so. *Sanctify them*; that is, (1.) “Qualify them for the office, with Christian graces and ministerial gifts, to make them able ministers of the New Testament.” (2.) “Separate them to the office, Rom. i. 1. I have called them, they have consented; Father, say *Amen* to it.” (3.) “Own them in the office; let thy hand go along with them; sanctify them by or in thy truth, as truth is opposed to figure and shadow; sanctify them really, not ritually and ceremonially, as the Levitical priests were, by anointing and sacrifice. Sanctify them to thy truth, the word of thy truth, to be the preachers of thy truth to the world; as the priests were sanctified to serve at the altar, so let them be to preach the gospel.” 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. Note, [1.] Jesus Christ intercedes for his ministers with a particular concern, and recommends to his Father’s grace those stars he carries in his right hand. [2.] The great thing to be asked of God for gospel ministers is that they may be sanctified, effectually separated from the world, entirely devoted to God, and experimentally acquainted with the influence of that word upon their own hearts which they preach to others. Let them have the *Urim and Thummim*, *light and integrity*.

II. We have here two pleas or arguments to enforce the petition for the disciples’ sanctification:—

1. The mission they had from him (v. 18): “*As thou hast sent me into the world*, to be thine ambassador to the children of men, so now that I am recalled *have I sent them into the world*, as my delegates.” Now here,

(1.) Christ speaks with great assurance of his own mission: *Thou hast sent me into the world*. The great author of the Christian religion had his commission and instructions from him who is the origin and object of all religion. He was sent of God to say what he said, and do what he did, and be what he is to those that believe on him; which was his comfort in his undertaking, and may be ours abundantly in our dependence upon him; his record was on high, for thence his mission was.

(2.) He speaks with great satisfaction of the commission he had given his disciples “*So have I sent them* on the same errand, and to carry on the same design;” to preach the same doctrine that he preached, and to confirm it with the same proofs, with a charge likewise to commit to other faithful men that which was committed to them. He gave them their commission (ch. xx. 21) with a reference to his own, and it magnifies their office that it comes from Christ, and that there is some affinity between the commission given to the ministers of reconciliation and that given to the Mediator; he is called an

apostle (Heb. iii. 1), a minister (Rom. xv. 8), a messenger, Mal. iii. 1. Only they are sent as servants, he as a Son. Now this comes in here as a reason, [1.] Why Christ was concerned so much for them, and laid their case so near his heart; because he had himself put them into a difficult office, which required great abilities for the due discharge of it. Note, Whom Christ sends he will stand by, and interest himself in those that are employed for him; what he calls us out to he will fit us out for, and bear us out in. [2.] Why he committed them to his Father; because he was concerned in their cause, their mission being in prosecution of his, and as it were an assignment out of it. Christ received gifts for men (Ps. lxxviii. 18), and then gave them to men (Eph. iv. 8), and therefore prays aid of his Father to warrant and uphold those gifts, and confirm his grant of them. The Father sanctified him when he sent him into the world, ch. x. 36. Now, they being sent as he was, let them also be sanctified.

2. The merit he had for them is another thing here pleaded (v. 19): *For their sakes I sanctify myself.* Here is, (1.) Christ's designation of himself to the work and office of Mediator: *I sanctified myself.* He entirely devoted himself to the undertaking, and all the parts of it, especially that which he was now going about—the offering up of himself without spot unto God, by the eternal Spirit. He, as the priest and altar, sanctified himself as the sacrifice. When he said, Father, glorify thy name—Father, thy will be done—Father, I commit my spirit into thy hands, he paid down the satisfaction he had engaged to make, and so sanctified himself. This he pleads with his Father, for his intercession is made in the virtue of his satisfaction; by his own blood he entered into the holy place (Heb. ix. 12), as the high priest, on the day of atonement, sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice at the same time that he burnt incense within the veil, Lev. xvi. 12, 14. (2.) Christ's design of kindness to his disciples herein; it is for their sakes, that they may be sanctified, that is, that they may be martyrs; so some. "I sacrifice myself, that they may be sacrificed to the glory of God and the church's good." Paul speaks of his being offered, Phil. ii. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 6. Whatever there is in the death of the saints that is precious in the sight of the Lord, it is owing to the death of the Lord Jesus. But I rather take it more generally, that they may be saints and ministers, duly qualified and accepted of God. [1.] The office of the ministry is the purchase of Christ's blood, and one of the blessed fruits of his satisfaction, and owes its virtue and value to Christ's merit. The priests under the law were consecrated with the blood of bulls and goats, but gospel ministers with the blood of Jesus. [2.] The real holiness of all good Christians is the fruit of Christ's death, by which the gift of the Holy Ghost was purchased, he

gave himself for his church, to sanctify it, Eph. v. 25, 26. And he that designed the end designed also the means, that they might be sanctified by the truth, the truth which Christ came into the world to bear witness to, and died to confirm. The word of truth receives its sanctifying virtue and power from the death of Christ. Some read it, that they may be sanctified in truth, that is, truly; for as God must be served, so, in order to this, we must be sanctified, in the spirit, and in truth. And this Christ has prayed for, for all that are his; for this is his will, even their sanctification, which encourages them to pray for it.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Next to their purity he prays for their unity; for the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable; and amity is amiable indeed when it is like the ointment on Aaron's holy head, and the dew on Zion's holy hill. Observe,

1. Who are included in this prayer (v. 20) "Not these only, not these only that are now my disciples" (the eleven, the seventy, with others, men and women that followed him when he was here on earth), "but for those also who shall believe on me through their word, either preached by them in their own day or written by them for the generations to come; I pray for them all, that they all may be one in their interest in this prayer, and may all receive benefit by it." Note, here, 1. Those, and those only, are interested in the mediation of Christ, that do, or shall, believe in him. This is that by which they are described, and it comprehends all the character and duty of a Christian. They that lived then, saw and believed, but they in after ages have not seen, and yet have believed. 2. It is through the word that souls are brought to believe on Christ, and it is for this end that Christ appointed the scriptures to be written, and a standing ministry to continue in the church, while the church stands, that is, while the world stands, for the raising up of a seed. 3. It is certainly and infallibly known to Christ who shall believe on him. He does not here pray at a venture,



upon a contingency depending on the treacherous will of man which pretends to be free, but by reason of sin is *in bondage with its children*; no, Christ knew very well whom he prayed for, the matter was reduced to a certainty by the divine prescience and purpose; he knew who were given him, who, being ordained to eternal life, were *entered in the Lamb's book*, and should undoubtedly believe, Acts xiii. 48. 4. Jesus Christ intercedes not only for great and eminent believers, but for the meanest and weakest; not for those only that are to be employed in the highest posts of trust and honour in his kingdom, but for all, even those that in the eye of the world are inconsiderable. As the divine providence extends itself to the meanest creature, so does the divine grace to the meanest Christian. The good Shepherd has an eye even to *the poor of the flock*. 5. Jesus Christ in his mediation had an actual regard to those of the chosen remnant that were yet unborn, the people that *should be created* (Ps. xxii. 31), the other *sheep* which he *must yet bring*. Before they are *formed in the womb he knows them* (Jer. i. 5), and prayers are filed in heaven for them beforehand, by him who *declareth the end from the beginning, and calleth things that are not as though they were*.

II. What is intended in this prayer (v. 21): *That they all may be one*. The same was said before (v. 11), *that they may be one as we are*, and again, v. 22. The heart of Christ was much upon this. Some think that the oneness prayed for in v. 11 has special reference to the disciples as ministers and apostles, that they might be one in their testimony to Christ; and that the harmony of the evangelists, and concurrence of the first preachers of the gospel, are owing to this prayer. Let them be not only of *one heart*, but of *one mouth*, speaking the same thing. The unity of gospel ministers is both the beauty and strength of the gospel interest. But it is certain that the oneness prayed for in v. 21 respects all believers. It is the prayer of Christ for all that are his, and we may be sure it is an answered prayer—*that they all may be one*, one in us (v. 21), *one as we are one* (v. 22), *made perfect in one*, v. 23. It includes three things:—

1. That they might all be *incorporated in one body*. "Father, look upon them all as one, and ratify that great charter by which they are embodied as one church. Though they live in distant places, from one end of heaven to the other, and in several ages, from the beginning to the close of time, and so cannot have any personal acquaintance or correspondence with each other, yet let them be united in me their common head." As Christ died, so he prayed, to *gather them all in one*, ch. xi. 52; Eph. i. 10.

2. That they might all be animated by one Spirit. This is plainly implied in this—*that they may be one in us*. Union with the Father and Son is obtained and kept up only

by the Holy Ghost. *He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit*, 1 Cor. vi. 17. Let them all be stamped with the same image and superscription, and influenced by the same power.

3. That they might all be *knit together* in the bond of love and charity, all of one heart. *That they all may be one*, (1.) In judgment and sentiment; not in every little thing—this is neither possible nor needful, but in the great things of God, and in them, by the virtue of this prayer, they are all agreed—that God's favour is better than life—that sin is the worst of evils, Christ the best of friends—that there is another life after this, and the like. (2.) In disposition and inclination. All that are sanctified have the same divine nature and image; they have all a new heart, and it is *one heart*. (3.) They are all one in their designs and aims. Every true Christian, *as far as he is so*, eyes the glory of God as his highest end, and the glory of heaven as his chief good. (4.) They are all one in their desires and prayers; though they differ in words and the manner of expressions, yet, having all received the same *spirit of adoption*, and observing the same rule, they pray for the same things in effect. (5.) All one in love and affection. Every true Christian has that in him which inclines him to love all true Christians as such. That which Christ here prays for is that *communion of saints* which we profess to believe; the fellowship which all believers have with God, and their intimate union with all the saints in heaven and earth, 1 John i. 3. But this prayer of Christ will not have its complete answer till all the saints come to heaven, for then, and not till then, they shall be *perfect in one*, v. 23; Eph. iv. 13.

III. What is intimated by way of plea or argument to enforce this petition; three things:—

1. The oneness that is between the Father and the Son, which is mentioned again and again, v. 11, 21—23. (1.) It is taken for granted that the Father and Son are one, one in nature and essence, equal in power and glory, one in mutual endearments. The *Father loveth the Son*, and the Son always pleased the Father. They are one in design, and one in operation. The intimacy of this oneness is expressed in these words, *thou in me, and I in thee*. This he often mentions for his support under his present sufferings, when his enemies were ready to fall upon him, and his friends to fall off from him; yet he was in the Father, and the Father in him. (2.) This is insisted on in Christ's prayer for his disciples' oneness, [1.] As the pattern of that oneness, showing how he desired they might be one. Believers are one in some measure as God and Christ are one; for, *First*, The union of believers is a strict and close union; they are united by a divine nature, by the power of divine grace, in pursuance of the divine counsels. *Secondly*, It



is a holy union, in the Holy Spirit, for holy ends; not a body politic for any secular purpose. *Thirdly*, It is, and will be at last, a complete union. Father and Son have the same attributes, properties, and perfections; so have believers now, as far as they are sanctified, and when grace shall be perfected in glory they will be exactly consonant to each other, all changed into the same image. [2.] As the centre of that oneness; that they may be *one in us*, all meeting here. There is *one God* and *one Mediator*; and herein believers are one, that they all agree to depend upon the favour of this one God as their felicity and the merit of this one Mediator as their righteousness. That is a conspiracy, not a union, which doth not centre in God as the end, and Christ as the way. All who are truly united to God and Christ, who are *one*, will soon be *united one to another*. [3.] As a plea for that oneness. The Creator and Redeemer are one in interest and design; but to what purpose are they so, if all believers be not one body with Christ, and do not jointly receive grace for grace from him, as he has received it for them? Christ's design was to reduce revolted mankind to God: "Father," says he, "let all that believe be one, that in *one body* they may be reconciled" (Eph. ii. 15, 16), which speaks of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the church; that great mystery, that the Gentiles should be *fellow-heirs, and of the same body* (Eph. iii. 6), to which I think this prayer of Christ principally refers, it being one great thing he aimed at in his dying; and I wonder none of the expositors I have met with should so apply it. "Father, let the Gentiles that believe be incorporated with the believing Jews, and *make of twain one new man*." Those words, *I in them, and thou in me*, show what that union is which is so necessary, not only to the beauty, but to the very being, of his church. *First*, Union with Christ: *I in them*. Christ dwelling in the hearts of believers is the life and soul of the new man. *Secondly*, Union with God through him: *Thou in me*, so as by me to be in them. *Thirdly*, Union with each other, resulting from these: *that they hereby may be made perfect in one*. We are complete in him.

2. The design of Christ in all his communications of light and grace to them (v. 22): "*The glory which thou gavest me, as the trustee or channel of conveyance, I have accordingly given them, to this intent, that they may be one, as we are one; so that those gifts will be in vain, if they be not one.*" Now these gifts are either, (1.) Those that were conferred upon the apostles, and first planters of the church. The glory of being God's ambassadors to the world—the glory of working miracles—the glory of gathering a church out of the world, and erecting the throne of God's kingdom among men—this glory was given to Christ, and some of the honour he put upon them when he sent them

to *disciple all nations*. Or, (2.) Those that are given in common to all believers. The glory of being in covenant with the Father, and accepted of him, of being laid in his bosom, and designed for a place at his right hand, was the glory which the Father gave to the Redeemer, and he has confirmed it to the redeemed. [1.] This honour he says he *hath given them*, because he hath intended it for them, settled it upon them, and secured it to them upon their believing Christ's promises to be real gifts. [2.] This was given to him to give to them; it was conveyed to him in trust for them, and he was faithful to him that appointed him. [3.] He gave it to them, that they *might be one*. *First*, to entitle them to the privilege of unity, that by virtue of their common relation to *one God the Father*, and *one Lord Jesus Christ*, they might be truly denominated one. The gift of the Spirit, that great glory which the Father gave to the Son, by him to be given to all believers, makes them one, for he works *all in all*, 1 Cor. xii. 4, &c. *Secondly*, To engage them to the duty of unity. That in consideration of their agreement and communion in one creed and one covenant, one Spirit and one Bible—in consideration of what they have in one God and one Christ, and of what they hope for in one heaven, they may be of one mind and one mouth. Worldly glory sets men at variance; for if some be advanced others are eclipsed, and therefore, while the disciples dreamed of a temporal kingdom, they were ever and anon quarrelling; but spiritual honours being conferred alike upon all Christ's subjects, they being all *made to our God kings and priests*, there is no occasion for contest nor emulation. The more Christians are taken up with the glory Christ has given them, the less desirous they will be of vain-glory, and consequently, the less disposed to quarrel.

3. He pleads the happy influence their oneness would have upon others, and the furtherance it would give to the public good. This is twice urged (v. 21): *That the world may believe that thou hast sent me*. And again (v. 23): *That the world may know it*, for without knowledge there can be no true faith. Believers must know what they believe, and why and wherefore they believe it. Those who believe at a venture, venture too far. Now Christ here shows,

(1.) His good-will to the world of mankind in general. Herein he is of his Father's mind, as we are sure he is in everything, that he would have all men to be saved, and to *come to the knowledge of the truth*, 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9. Therefore it is his will that all means possible should be used, and no stone left unturned, for the conviction and conversion of the world. We know not who are chosen, but we must in our places do our utmost to further men's salvation, and take heed of doing anything to hinder it.

(2.) The good fruit of the church's *one*



ness ; it will be an evidence of the truth of Christianity, and a means of bringing many to embrace it.

[1.] In general, it will recommend Christianity to the world, and to the good opinion of those that are without. *First*, The embodying of Christians in one society by the gospel charter will greatly promote Christianity. When the world shall see so many of those that were its children called out of its family, distinguished from others, and changed from what they themselves sometimes were,—when they shall see this society raised by the foolishness of preaching, and kept up by miracles of divine providence and grace, and how admirably well it is modelled and constituted, they will be ready to say, *We will go with you, for we see that God is with you.* *Secondly*, The uniting of Christians in love and charity is the beauty of their profession, and invites others to join with them, as the love that was among those primo-primitive Christians, Acts ii. 42, 43; iv. 32, 33. When Christianity, instead of causing quarrels about itself, makes all other strifes to cease,—when it cools the fiery, smooths the rugged, and disposes men to be kind and loving, courteous and beneficent, to all men, studious to preserve and promote peace in all relations and societies, this will recommend it to all that have anything either of natural religion or natural affection in them.

[2.] In particular, it will beget in men good thoughts, *First*, Of Christ: They will know and believe that *thou hast sent me*. By this it will appear that Christ was sent of God, and that his doctrine was divine, in that his religion prevails to join so many of different capacities, tempers, and interests in other things, in one body by faith, with one heart by love. Certainly he was sent by the God of power, who fashions men's hearts alike, and the God of love and peace; when the worshippers of God are one, he is one, and his name one. *Secondly*, Of Christians: They will know that *thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me*. Here is, 1. The privilege of believers: *the Father himself loveth them with a love resembling his love to his Son*, for they are loved in him with an everlasting love. 2. The evidence of their interest in this privilege, and that is their being one. By this it will appear that God loves us, if we *love one another with a pure heart*; for wherever the love of God is shed abroad in the heart it will change it into the same image. See how much good it would do to the world to know better how dear to God all good Christians are. The Jews had a saying, *If the world did but know the worth of good men, they would hedge them about with pearls*. Those that have so much of God's love should have more of ours.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with

me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. 26 And I have declared unto them thy name; and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Here is, I. A petition for the glorifying of all those that were given to Christ (v. 24), not only these apostles, but all believers: *Father, I will that they may be with me*. \*Observe,

1. The connection of this request with those foregoing. He had prayed that God would preserve, sanctify, and unite them; and now he prays that he would crown all his gifts with their glorification. In this method we must pray, first for grace, and then for glory (Ps. lxxxiv. 11); for in this method God gives. Far be it from the only wise God to come under the imputation either of that *foolish builder who without a foundation built upon the sand*, as he would if he should glorify any whom he has not first sanctified; or of that *foolish builder who began to build and was not able to finish*, as he would if he should sanctify any, and not glorify them.

2. The manner of the request: *Father, I will*. Here, as before, he addresses himself to God as a Father, and therein we must do likewise; but when he says, *θέλω—I will*, he speaks a language peculiar to himself, and such as does not become ordinary petitioners, but very well became him who paid for what he prayed for. (1.) This intimates the authority of his intercession in general; his word was with power in heaven, as well as on earth. He entering with his own blood into the holy place, his intercession there has an uncontrollable efficacy. He intercedes as a king, for he is a priest upon his throne (like Melchizedek), a king-priest. (2.) It intimates his particular authority in this matter; he had a power to give eternal life (v. 2), and, pursuant to that power, he says, *Father, I will*. Though now he took upon him the form of a servant, yet that power being to be most illustriously exerted when he shall come the second time in the glory of a judge, to say, *Come ye blessed*, having that in his eye, he might well say, *Father, I will*. 3. The request itself—that all the elect might come to be with him in heaven at last, to see his glory, and to share in it. Now observe here,

(1.) Under what notion we are to hope for heaven? wherein does that happiness consist? three things make heaven:—[I.] It is to be where Christ is: *Where I am*; in the

paradise whither Christ's soul went at death; in the third heavens whither his soul and body went at his ascension:—*Where I am, am to be shortly, am to be eternally.* In this world we are but in transitu—on our passage; there we truly are where we are to be for ever; so Christ reckoned, and so must we. [2.] It is to be with him where he is; this is no tautology, but intimates that we shall not only be in the same happy place where Christ is, but that the happiness of the place will consist in his presence; this is *the fulness of its joy.* The very heaven of heaven is to be with Christ, there in company with him, and communion with him, Phil. i. 23. [3.] It is to behold his glory, which the Father has given him. Observe, First, The glory of the Redeemer is the brightness of heaven. That glory before which angels cover their faces was his glory, ch. xii. 41. The Lamb is the light of the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 23. Christ will come in the glory of his Father, for he is the brightness of his glory. God shows his glory there, as he does his grace here, through Christ. "*The Father has given me this glory,*" though he was as yet in his low estate; but it was very sure, and very near. Secondly, The felicity of the redeemed consists very much in the beholding of this glory; they will have the immediate view of his glorious person. *I shall see God in my flesh,* Job xix. 26, 27. They will have a clear insight into his glorious undertaking, as it will be then accomplished; they will see into those springs of love from which flow all the streams of grace; they shall have an appropriating sight of Christ's glory (*Uxor fulget radiis mariti—The wife shines with the radiance of her husband*), and an assimilating sight: they shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

(2.) Upon what ground we are to hope for heaven; no other than purely the mediation and intercession of Christ, because he hath said, *Father, I will.* Our sanctification is our evidence, for *he that has this hope in him purifies himself*; but it is the will of Christ that is our title, *by which will we are sanctified*, Heb. x. 10. Christ speaks here as if he did not count his own happiness complete unless he had his elect to share with him in it, for it is *the bringing of many sons to glory that makes the captain of our salvation perfect*, Heb. ii. 10.

4. The argument to back this request: *for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.* This is a reason, (1.) Why he expected this glory himself. Thou wilt give it to me, for thou lovedst me. The honour and power given to the Son as Mediator were founded in the Father's love to him (ch. v. 20): *the Father loves the Son*, is infinitely well pleased in his undertaking, and therefore has given all things into his hands; and, the matter being concerted in the divine counsels from eternity, he is said to love him as Mediator before the foundation of the world.

Or, (2.) Why he expected that those who were given to him should be with him to share in his glory: "*Thou lovedst me*, and them in me, and canst deny me nothing I ask for them."

II. The conclusion of the prayer, which is designed to enforce all the petitions for the disciples, especially the last, that they may be glorified. Two things he insists upon, and pleads:—

1. The respect he had to his Father, v. 25 Observe,

(1.) The title he gives to God: *O righteous Father.* When he prayed that they might be sanctified, he called him *holy Father*; when he prays that they may be glorified, he calls him *righteous Father*; for it is a crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give. God's righteousness was engaged for the giving out of all that good which the Father had promised and the Son had purchased.

(2.) The character he gives of the world that lay in wickedness: *The world has not known thee.* Note, Ignorance of God overspreads the world of mankind; this is the darkness they sit in. Now this is urged here, [1.] To show that these disciples needed the aids of special grace, both because of the necessity of their work—they were to bring a world that knew not God to the knowledge of him; and also because of the difficulty of their work—they must bring light to those that rebelled against the light; therefore keep them. [2.] To show that they were qualified for further peculiar favours, for they had that knowledge of God which the world had not.

(3.) The plea he insists upon for himself. *But I have known thee.* Christ knew the Father as no one else ever did; knew upon what grounds he went in his undertaking, knew his Father's mind in every thing, and therefore, in this prayer, came to him with confidence, as we do to one we know. Christ is here suing out blessings for those that were his; pursuing this petition, when he had said, *The world has not known thee*, one would expect it should follow, *but they have known thee*; no, their knowledge was not to be boasted of, *but I have known thee*, which intimates that there is nothing in us to recommend us to God's favour, but all our interest in him, and intercourse with him, result from, and depend upon, Christ's interest and intercourse. We are unworthy, but he is worthy.

(4.) The plea he insists upon for his disciples: *And they have known that thou hast sent me*; and, [1.] Hereby they are distinguished from the unbelieving world. When multitudes to whom Christ was sent, and his grace offered, would not believe that God had sent him, these knew it, and believed it, and were not ashamed to own it. Note, To know and believe in Jesus Christ, in the midst of a world that persists in igno-



rance and infidelity, is highly pleasing to God, and shall certainly be crowned with distinguishing glory. Singular faith qualifies for singular favours. [2.] Hereby they are interested in the mediation of Christ, and partake of the benefit of his acquaintance with the Father: "*I have known thee, immediately and perfectly; and these, though they have not so known thee, nor were capable of knowing thee so, yet have known that thou hast sent me, have known that which was required of them to know, have known the Creator in the Redeemer.*" Knowing Christ as sent of God, they have, in him, known the Father, and are introduced to an acquaintance with him; therefore, "Father, look after them for my sake."

2. The respect he had to his disciples (v. 26): "I have led them into the knowledge of thee, and will do it yet more and more; with this great and kind intention, *that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*" Observe here,

(1.) What Christ had done for them: *I have declared unto them thy name.* [1.] This he had done for those that were his immediate followers. *All the time that he went in and out among them,* he made it his business to declare his Father's name to them, and to beget in them a veneration for it. The tendency of all his sermons and miracles was to advance his Father's honour, and to spread the knowledge of him, *ch. i. 18.* [2.] This he has done for all that believe on him; for they had not been brought to believe if Christ had not made known to them his Father's name. Note, *First,* We are indebted to Christ for all the knowledge we have of the Father's name; he declares it, and he opens the understanding to receive that revelation. *Secondly,* Those whom Christ recommends to the favour of God he first leads into an acquaintance with God.

(2.) What he intended to do yet further for them: *I will declare it.* To the disciples he designed to give further instructions after his resurrection (Acts i. 3), and to bring them into a much more intimate acquaintance with divine things by the pouring out of the Spirit after his ascension; and to all believers, into whose hearts he hath shined, he shines more and more. Where Christ has declared his Father's name, he will declare it; for to him *that hath shall be given;* and those that know God both need and desire to know more of him. This is fitly pleaded for them "Father, own and favour them, for they will own and honour thee."

(3.) What he aimed at in all this; not to fill their heads with curious speculations, and furnish them with something to talk of among the learned, but to secure and advance their real happiness in two things:—

[1.] Communion with God: "Therefore I have given them the knowledge of thy name, of all that whereby thou hast made thyself known, *that thy love, even that where-*

*with thou hast loved me, may be, not only towards them, but in them;*" that is, *First,* "Let them have the fruits of that love for their sanctification; let the Spirit of love, with which thou hast filled me, be in them." Christ declares his Father's name to believers, that with that divine light darted into their minds a divine love may be shed abroad in their hearts, to be in them a commanding constraining principle of holiness, that they may partake of a divine nature. When God's love to us comes to be in us, it is like the virtue which the loadstone gives the needle, inclining it to move towards the pole; it draws out the soul towards God in pious and devout affections, which are as the spirits of the divine life in the soul. *Secondly,* "Let them have the taste and relish of that love for their consolation; let them not only be interested in the love of God, by having God's name declared to them, but, by a further declaration of it, let them have the comfort of that interest; that they may not only know God, but know that they know him," 1 John ii. 3. It is the love of God thus shed abroad in the heart that fills it with joy, Rom. v. 3, 5. This God has provided for, that we may not only be satisfied with his loving kindness, but be satisfied of it; and so may live a life of complacency in God and communion with him; this we must pray for, this we must press after; if we have it, we must thank Christ for it; if we want it, we may thank ourselves.

[2.] Union with Christ in order hereunto: *And I in them.* There is no getting into the love of God but through Christ, nor can we keep ourselves in that love but by abiding in Christ, that is, having him to abide in us; nor can we have the sense and apprehension of that love but by our experience of the indwelling of Christ, that is, the Spirit of Christ in our hearts. It is Christ in us that is the only hope of glory that will not make us ashamed, Col. i. 27. All our communion with God, the reception of his love to us with our return of love to him again, passes through the hands of the Lord Jesus, and the comfort of it is owing purely to him. Christ had said but a little before, *I in them* (v. 23), and here it is repeated (though the sense was complete without it), and the prayer closed with it, to show how much the heart of Christ was set upon it; all his petitions centre in this, and with this the prayers of Jesus, the Son of David, are ended: "*I in them; let me have this, and I desire no more.*" It is the glory of the Redeemer to dwell in the redeemed: it is his rest for ever, and he has desired it. Let us therefore make sure our union with Christ, and then take the comfort of his intercession. This prayer had an end, but that he ever lives to make.

#### CHAP. XVIII.

Hitherto this evangelist has recorded little of the history of Christ, only so far as was requisite to introduce his discourses; but now that the time drew nigh that Jesus must die he is very particular in relating the circumstances of his sufferings, and some

which the others had omitted, especially his sayings. So far were his followers from being ashamed of his cross, or endeavouring to conceal it, that this was what, both by word and writing, they were most industrious to proclaim, and gloried in it. This chapter relates, I. How Christ was arrested in the garden and surrendered himself a prisoner, ver. 1.—12. II. How he was abused in the high priest's court, and how Peter, in the mean time, denied him, ver. 13.—27. III. How he was prosecuted before Pilate, and examined by him, and put in election with Barabbas for the favour of the people, and lost it, ver. 28.—40.

**W**HEN Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. 2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. 3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward and fell to the ground. 7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. 8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: 9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. 10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. 11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? 12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him.

The hour was now come that *the captain of our salvation*, who was to be made perfect by sufferings, should engage the enemy. We have here his entrance upon the encounter. The day of recompence is in his heart, and the year of his redeemed is come, and his own arm works the salvation, for he has no second. Let us turn aside now, and see this great sight.

I. Our Lord Jesus, like a bold champion, takes the field first (v. 1, 2). *When he had*

*spoken these words*, preached the sermon, prayed his prayer, and so finished his testimony, he would lose no time, but *went forth* immediately out of the house, out of the city, by moon-light, for the passover was observed at the full moon, *with his disciples* (the eleven, for Judas was otherwise employed), and *he went over the brook Cedron*, which runs between Jerusalem and the mount of Olives, *where was a garden*, not his own, but some friend's, who allowed him the liberty of it. Observe,

1. That our Lord Jesus entered upon his sufferings *when he had spoken these words*, as Matt. xxvi. 1, *When he had finished all these sayings*. Here it is intimated, (1.) That our Lord Jesus took his work before him. The office of the priest was to teach, and pray, and offer sacrifice. Christ, after teaching and praying, applies himself to make atonement. Christ had said all he had to say as a prophet, and now he addresses himself to the discharge of his office as a priest, *to make his soul an offering for sin*; and, when he had gone through this, he entered upon his kingly office. (2.) That having by his sermon prepared his disciples for this hour of trial, and by his prayer prepared himself for it, he then courageously went out to meet it. When he had put on his armour, he entered the lists, and not till then. Let those that suffer according to the will of God, in a good cause, with a good conscience, and having a clear call to it, comfort themselves with this, that Christ will not engage those that are his in any conflict, but he will first do that for them which is necessary to prepare them for it; and if we receive Christ's instructions and comforts, and be interested in his intercession, we may, with an unshaken resolution, venture through the greatest hardships in the way of duty.

2. That *he went forth with his disciples*. Judas knew what house he was in in the city, and he could have staid and met his sufferings there; but, (1.) He would do as he was wont to do, and not alter his method, either to meet the cross or to miss it, when his hour was come. It was his custom when he was at Jerusalem, after he had spent the day in public work, to retire at night to the mount of Olives; there his quarters were, in the skirts of the city, for they would not make room for him in the palaces, in the heart of the town. This being his custom, he would not be put out of his method by the foresight of his sufferings, but, as Daniel, did then just as he did aforetime, Dan. vi. 10. (2.) He was as unwilling that there should be an uproar among the people as his enemies were, for it was not his way to strive or cry. If he had been seized in the city, and a tumult raised thereby, mischief might have been done, and a great deal of blood shed, and therefore he withdrew. Note, When we find ourselves involved in trouble, we should be afraid of involving others with us. It is



no disgrace to the followers of Christ to fall tamely. Those who aim at honour from men value themselves upon a resolution to sell their lives as dearly as they can; but those who know that their blood is precious to Christ, and that not a drop of it shall be shed but upon a valuable consideration, need not stand upon such terms. (3.) He would set us an example in the beginning of his passion, as he did at the end of it, of retirement from the world. *Let us go forth to him, without the camp, bearing his reproach*, Heb. xiii. 13. We must lay aside, and leave behind, the crowds, and cares, and comforts, of cities, even holy cities, if we would cheerfully take up our cross, and keep up our communion with God therein.

3. That he went *over the brook Cedron*. He must go over this to go to the *mount of Olives*, but the notice taken of it intimates that there was something in it significant; and it points, (1.) At David's prophecy concerning the Messiah (Ps. cx. 7), that *he shall drink of the brook in the way*; the brook of suffering in the way to his glory and our salvation, signified by the *brook Cedron*, the *black brook*, so called either from the darkness of the valley it ran through or the colour of the water, tainted with the dirt of the city; such a brook Christ drank of, when it lay in the way of our redemption, and *therefore shall he lift up the head*, his own and ours. (2.) At David's pattern, as a type of the Messiah. In his flight from Absalom, particular notice is taken of his *passing over the brook Cedron, and going up by the ascent of mount Olivet, weeping*, and all that were with him in tears too, 2 Sam. xv. 23, 30. *The Son of David*, being driven out by the rebellious Jews, who would not have him to reign over them (and Judas, like Aliothophel, being in the plot against him), passed over the brook in meanness and humiliation, attended by a company of true mourners. The godly kings of Judah had burnt and destroyed the idols they found at the *brook Cedron*: Asa, 2 Chron. xv. 16; Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxx. 14; Josiah, 2 Kings xxiii. 4, 6. Into that brook the abominable things were cast. Christ, *being now made sin for us*, that he might abolish it and take it away, began his passion by the same brook. Mount Olivet, where Christ began his sufferings, lay on the east side of Jerusalem; mount Calvary, where he finished them, on the west; for in them he had an eye to such as should come from the east and the west.

4. That he entered into a garden. This circumstance is taken notice of only by this evangelist, that Christ's sufferings began in a garden. In the garden of Eden sin began; there the curse was pronounced, there the Redeemer was promised, and therefore in a garden that promised seed entered the lists with the old serpent. Christ was buried also in a garden. (1.) Let us, when we walk in our gardens, take occasion thence to meditate

on Christ's sufferings in a garden, to which we owe all the pleasure we have in our gardens, for by them 'he curse upon the ground for man's sake was removed. (2.) When we are in the midst of our possessions and enjoyments, we must keep up an expectation of troubles, for our gardens of delight are in a vale of tears.

5. That he had his disciples with him, (1.) Because he used to take them with him when he retired for prayer. (2.) They must be witnesses of his sufferings, and his patience under them, that they might with the more assurance and affection preach them to the world (Luke xxiv. 48), and be themselves prepared to suffer. (3.) He would take them into the danger to show them their weakness, notwithstanding the promises they had made of fidelity. Christ sometimes brings his people into difficulties, that he may magnify himself in their deliverance.

6. That Judas the traitor *knew the place*, knew it to be the place of his usual retirement, and probably, by some word Christ had dropped, knew that he intended to be there that night, for want of a better closet. A solitary garden is a proper place for meditation and prayer, and after a passover is a proper time to retire for private devotion, that we may pray over the impressions made and the vows renewed, and clench the nail. Mention is made of Judas's knowing the place, (1.) To aggravate the sin of Judas, that he would betray his Master, notwithstanding the intimate acquaintance he had with him; nay, and that he would make use of his familiarity with Christ, as giving him an opportunity of betraying him; a generous mind would have scorned to do so base a thing. Thus has Christ's holy religion been *wounded in the house of its friends*, as it could not have been wounded any where else. Many an apostate could not have been so profane, if he had not been a professor; could not have ridiculed scriptures and ordinances, if he had not known them. (2.) To magnify the love of Christ, that, though he knew where the traitor would seek him, thither he went to be found of him, now that he knew his *hour was come*. Thus he showed himself willing to suffer and die for us. What he did was not by constraint, but by consent; though as man he said, *Let this cup pass away*, as Mediator he said, "*Lo, I come. I come with a good will.*" It was late in the night (we may suppose eight or nine o'clock) when Christ went out to the garden; for it was not only his *meat and drink*, but his rest and sleep, *to do the will of him that sent him*. When others were going to bed, he was going to prayer, going to suffer.

II. *The captain of our salvation* having taken the field, the enemy presently comes upon the spot, and attacks him (v. 3): Judas with his men comes thither, commissioned by the chief priests, especially those among them that were Pharisees, who were the

most bitter enemies to Christ. This evangelist passes over Christ's agony, because the other three had fully related it, and presently introduces Judas and his company that came to seize him. Observe,

1. The persons employed in this action—a *band of men and officers from the chief priests, with Judas*. (1.) Here is a multitude engaged against Christ—a *band of men*, *σπεῖρα*—cohors, a regiment, a Roman band, which some think was five hundred men, others a thousand. Christ's friends were few, his enemies many. Let us therefore *not follow a multitude to do evil*, nor fear a multitude designing evil to us, *if God be for us*. (2.) Here is a mixed multitude; the band of men were Gentiles, Roman soldiers, a detachment out of the guards that were posted in the tower of Antonia, to be a curb upon the city; the *officers of the chief priests*, *ἱερωφῆται*. Either their domestic servants, or the officers of their courts, were Jews; these had an enmity to each other, but were united against Christ, who came to *reconcile both to God in one body*. (3.) It is a commissioned multitude, not a popular tumult; no, they have received orders *from the chief priests*, upon whose suggestion to the governor that this Jesus was a dangerous man, it is likely, they had a warrant from him too to take him up, *for they feared the people*. See what enemies Christ and his gospel have had, and are likely to have, numerous and potent, and therefore formidable: ecclesiastical and civil powers combined against them, Ps. ii. 1, 2. Christ said it would be so (Matt. x. 18), and found it so. (4.) All under the direction of Judas. He received this *band of men*; it is probable that he requested it, alleging that it was necessary to send a good force, being as ambitious of the honour of commanding in chief in this expedition as he was covetous of *the wages of this unrighteousness*. He thought himself wonderfully preferred from coming in the rear of the contemptible twelve to be placed at the head of these formidable hundreds; he never made such a figure before, and promised himself, perhaps, that this should not be the last time, but he should be rewarded with a captain's commission, or better, if he succeeded well in this enterprise.

2. The preparation they had made for an attack: *They came with lanterns, and torches, and weapons*. (1.) If Christ should abscond, though they had moonlight, they would have occasion for their lights; but they might have spared these; the second Adam was not driven, as the first was, to hide himself, either for fear or shame, *among the trees of the garden*. It was folly to light a candle to seek the Sun by. (2.) If he should resist, they would have occasion for their arms. *The weapons of his warfare were spiritual*, and at these weapons he had often beaten them, and *put them to silence*, and therefore they have now recourse to other weapons, *swords and staves*.

III. Our Lord Jesus gloriously repulsed

the first onset of the enemy, v. 4—6, where observe,

1. How he received them, with all the mildness imaginable towards them, and all the calmness imaginable in himself.

(1.) He met them with a very soft and mild question (v. 4): *Knowing all things that should come upon him*, and therefore not at all surprised with this alarm, with a wonderful intrepidity and presence of mind, undisturbed and undaunted, he *went forth* to meet them, and, as if he had been unconcerned, softly asked, "*Whom seek you?*" What is the matter? What means this bustle at this time of night?" See here, [1.] Christ's foresight of his sufferings: he *knew all those things that should come upon him*, for he had bound himself to suffer them. Unless we had strength, as Christ had, to bear the discovery, we should not covet to know what shall come upon us; it would but anticipate our pain; *sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*: yet it will do us good to expect sufferings in general, so that when they come we may say, "It is but what we looked for, the cost we sat down and counted upon." [2.] Christ's forwardness to his sufferings; he did not run away from them, but went out to meet them, and reached forth his hand to take the bitter cup. When the people would have forced him to a crown, and offered to make him a king in Galilee, he withdrew, and hid himself (ch. vi. 15); but, when they came to force him to a cross, he offered himself; for he came to this world to suffer and went to the other world to reign. This will not warrant us needlessly to expose ourselves to trouble, for we know not when our hour is come; but we are called to suffering when we have no way to avoid it but by sin; and, when it comes to this, let *none of these things move us*, for they cannot hurt us.

(2.) He met them with a very calm and mild answer when they told him whom they were in quest of, v. 5. They said, *Jesus of Nazareth*; and he said, *I am he* [1.] It should seem, *their eyes were held*, that they could not know him. It is highly probable that many of the Roman band, at least the officers of the temple, had often seen him, if only to satisfy their curiosity; Judas, however, to be sure, knew him well enough, and yet none of them could pretend to say, *Thou art the man we seek*. Thus he showed them the folly of bringing lights to see for him, for he could make them not to know him when they saw him; and he has herein shown us how easily he can infatuate the counsels of his enemies, and make them lose themselves, when they are seeking mischief. [2.] In their enquiries for him they called him *Jesus of Nazareth*, which was the only title they knew him by, and probably he was so called in their warrant. It was a name of reproach given him, to darken the evidence of his being the Messiah. By this it appears that they knew him not, whence he was;



for, if they had known him, surely they would not have persecuted him. [3.] He fairly answers them: *I am he*. He did not improve the advantage he had against them by their blindness, as Elisha did against the Syrians, telling them, *This is not the way, neither is this the city*; but improves it as an opportunity of showing his willingness to suffer. Though they called him Jesus of Nazareth, he answered to the name, for he despised the reproach; he might have said, *I am not he*, for he was *Jesus of Bethlehem*; but he would by no means allow equivocations. He has hereby taught us to own him, whatever it cost us; not to be ashamed of him or his words; but even in difficult times to confess Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner. *I am he*, Ἐγώ εἰμι—I am he, is the glorious name of the blessed God (Exod. iii. 14), and the honour of that name is justly challenged by the blessed Jesus. [4.] Particular notice is taken, in a parenthesis, *that Judas stood with them*. He that used to stand with those that followed Christ now stood with those that fought against him. This describes an apostate; he is one that changes sides. He herds himself with those with whom his heart always was, and with whom he shall have his lot in the judgment-day. This is mentioned, *First*, To show the impudence of Judas. One would wonder where he got the confidence with which he now faced his Master, and *was not ashamed, neither could he blush*; Satan in his heart gave him a whore's forehead. *Secondly*, To show that Judas was particularly aimed at in the power which went along with that word, *I am he*, to foil the aggressors. It was an arrow levelled at the traitor's conscience, and pierced him to the quick; for Christ's coming and his voice will be more terrible to apostates and betrayers than to sinners of any other class.

2. See how he terrified them, and obliged them to retire (v. 6): *They went backward, and, like men thunder-struck, fell to the ground*. It should seem, they did not fall forward, as humbling themselves before him, and yielding to him, but backward, as standing it out to the utmost. Thus Christ was declared to be more than a man, even when he was trampled upon as a worm, and no man. This word, *I am he*, had revived his disciples, and raised them up (Matt. xiv. 27); but the same word strikes his enemies down. Hereby he showed plainly,

(1.) What he could have done with them. When he struck them down, he could have struck them dead; when he spoke them *to the ground*, he could have spoken them to hell, and have sent them, like Korah's company, the next way thither; but he would not do so, [1.] Because the hour of his suffering was come, and he would not put it by; he would only show that his life was not forced from him, but *he laid it down of himself*, as he had said. [2.] Because he would give an

instance of his patience and forbearance with the worst of men, and his compassionate love to his very enemies. In striking them down, and no more, he gave them both a call to repent and space to repent; but *their hearts were hardened*, and all was in vain.

(2.) What he will do at last with all his implacable enemies, *that will not repent to give him glory; they shall flee, they shall fall, before him*. Now the scripture was accomplished (Ps. xxi. 12), *Thou shalt make them turn their back*, and Ps. xx. 8. And it will be accomplished more and more; *with the breath of his mouth he will slay the wicked*, 2 Thes. ii. 8; Rev. xix. 21. *Quid judicatoris faciet, qui judicandus hoc facit?*—What will he do when he shall come to judge, seeing he did this when he came to be judged?—Augustine.

IV. Having given his enemies a repulse, he gives his friends a protection, and that by his word too, v. 7—9, where we may observe,

1. How he continued to expose himself to their rage, v. 7. They did not lie long where they fell, but, by divine permission, got up again; it is only in the other world that God's judgments are everlasting. When they were down, one would have thought Christ should have made his escape; when they were up again, one would have thought they should have let fall their pursuit; but still we find, (1.) They are as eager as ever to seize him. It is in some confusion and disorder that they recover themselves; they cannot imagine what ailed them, that they could not keep their ground, but will impute it to any thing rather than Christ's power. Note, There are hearts so very hard in sin that nothing will work upon them to reduce and reclaim them. (2.) He is as willing as ever to be seized. When they were fallen before him, he did not insult over them, but, seeing them at a loss, asked them the same question, *Whom seek you?* And they gave him the same answer, *Jesus of Nazareth*. In his repeating the question, he seems to come yet closer to their consciences: "Do you not know *whom you seek?* Are you not aware that you are in error, and will you meddle with your match? Have you not had enough of it, but will you try the other struggle? *Did ever any harden his heart against God and prosper?*" In their repeating the same answer, they showed an obstinacy in their wicked way; they still call him *Jesus of Nazareth*, with as much disdain as ever, and Judas is as unrelenting as any of them. *Let us therefore fear lest, by a few bold steps at first in a sinful way, our hearts be hardened*.

2. How he contrived to secure his disciples from their rage. He improved this advantage against them for the protection of his followers. When he shows his courage with reference to himself, *I have told you that I am he*, he shows his care for his disciples, *Let these go their way*. He speaks this as a command to them, rather than a contract



with them; for they lay at his mercy, not he at theirs. He charges them therefore as *one having authority*: "*Let these go their way*; it is at your peril if you meddle with them." This aggravated the sin of the disciples in forsaking him, and particularly Peter's in denying him, that Christ had given them this pass, or warrant of protection, and yet they had not faith and courage enough to rely upon it, but betook themselves to such base and sorry shifts for their security. When Christ said, *Let these go their way*, he intended,

(1.) To manifest his affectionate concern for his disciples. When he exposed himself, he excused them, because they were not as yet fit to suffer; their faith was weak, and their spirits were low, and it would have been as much as their souls, and the lives of their souls, were worth, to bring them into sufferings now. *New wine must not be put into old bottles*. And, besides, they had other work to do; they must go their way, for they are to go into all the world, to preach the gospel. *Destroy them not, for a blessing is in them*. Now herein, [1.] Christ gives us a great encouragement to follow him; for, though he has allotted us sufferings, yet he considers our frame, will wisely time the cross, and proportion it to our strength, and will deliver the godly out of temptation, either from it, or through it. [2.] He gives us a good example of love to our brethren and concern for their welfare. We must not consult our own ease and safety only, but others, as well as our own, and in some cases more than our own. There is a generous and heroic love, which will enable us to *lay down our lives for the brethren*, 1 John iii. 16.

(2.) He intended to give a specimen of his undertaking as Mediator. When he offered himself to suffer and die, it was that we might escape. He was our *ἀντιψυχος*—*a sufferer in our stead*; when he said, *Lo, I come*, he said also, *Let these go their way*; like the ram offered instead of Isaac.

3. Now herein he confirmed the word which he had spoken a little before (*ch. xvii. 12*), *Of those whom thou gavest me, I have lost none*. Christ, by fulfilling that word in this particular, gave an assurance that it should be accomplished in the full extent of it, not only for those that were now with him, but for all that should believe on him through their word. Though Christ's keeping them was meant especially of the preservation of their souls from sin and apostasy, yet it is here applied to the preservation of their natural lives, and very fitly, for even the body was a part of Christ's charge and care; he is to *raise it up at the last day*, and therefore to preserve it as well as *the spirit and soul*, 1 Thess. v. 23; 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. Christ will preserve the natural life for the service to which it is designed; it is given to him to be used for him, and he will not lose the service of it, but will be magnified in it,

*whether by life or death*; it shall be held in life as long as any use is to be made of it. Christ's witnesses shall not die till they have given in their evidence. But this is not all; this preservation of the disciples was, in the tendency of it, a spiritual preservation. They were now so weak in faith and resolution that in all probability, if they had been called out to suffer at this time, they would have shamed themselves and their Master, and some of them, at least the weaker of them, would have been lost; and therefore, that he might *lose none*, he would not expose them. The safety and preservation of the saints are owing, not only to the divine grace in proportioning the strength to the trial, but to the divine providence in proportioning the trial to the strength.

V. Having provided for the safety of his disciples, he rebukes the rashness of one of them, and represses the violence of his followers, as he had repulsed the violence of his persecutors, *v. 10, 11*, where we have,

1. Peter's rashness. He had a sword; it is not likely that he wore one constantly as a gentleman, but they had two swords among them all (Luke xxii. 38), and Peter, being entrusted with one, drew it; for now, if ever, he thought it was his time to use it; and *he smote one of the high priest's servants*, who was probably one of the forwardest, and aiming, it is likely, to cleave him down the head, missed his blow, and only *cut off his right ear*. *The servant's name*, for the greater certainty of the narrative, is recorded; it was *Malchus*, or *Malluch*, Neh. x. 4.

(1.) We must here acknowledge Peter's good-will; he had an honest zeal for his Master, though now misguided. He had lately promised to venture his life for him, and would now make his words good. Probably it exasperated Peter to see Judas at the head of this gang; his baseness excited Peter's boldness, and I wonder that when he did draw his sword he did not aim at the traitor's head.

(2.) Yet we must acknowledge Peter's ill conduct; and, though his good intention did excuse, yet it would not justify him. [1.] He had no warrant from his Master for what he did. Christ's soldiers must wait the word of command, and not outrun it; before they expose themselves to sufferings, they must see to it, not only that their cause be good, but their call clear. [2.] He transgressed the duty of his place, and resisted the powers that were, which Christ had never countenanced, but forbidden (Matt. v. 39): *that you resist not evil*. [3.] He opposed his Master's sufferings, and, notwithstanding the rebuke he had for it once, is ready to repeat, *Master, spare thyself*; suffering be *far from thee*; though Christ had told him that he must and would suffer, and that his hour was now come. Thus, while he seemed to fight for Christ, he fought against him. [4.] He



broke the capitulation his Master had lately made with the enemy. When he said, *Let these go their way*, he not only indented for their safety, but in effect passed his word for their good behaviour, that they should go away peaceably; this Peter heard, and yet would not be bound by it. As we may be guilty of a sinful cowardice when we are called to appear, so we may be of a sinful forwardness when we are called to retire. [5.] He foolishly exposed himself and his fellow disciples to the fury of this enraged multitude. If he had cut off Malchus's head when he cut off his ear, we may suppose the soldiers would have fallen upon all the disciples, and have hewn them to pieces, and would have represented Christ as no better than Barabbas. Thus many have been guilty of self-destruction, in their zeal for self-preservation. [6.] Peter played the coward so soon after this (denying his Master) that we have reason to think he would not have done this but that he saw his Master cause them to fall on the ground, and then he could deal with them; but, when he saw him surrender himself notwithstanding, his courage failed him; whereas the true Christian hero will appear in the cause of Christ, not only when it is prevailing, but when it seems to be declining; will be on the right side, though it be not the rising side.

(3.) We must acknowledge God's overruling providence in directing the stroke (so that it should do no more execution, but only cut off his ear, which was rather marking him than maiming him), as also in giving Christ an opportunity to manifest his power and goodness in healing the hurt, Luke xxii. 51. Thus what was in danger of turning to Christ's reproach proved an occasion of that which redounded much to his honour, even among his adversaries.

2. The rebuke his Master gave him (v. 11): *Put up thy sword into the sheath*, or scabbard; it is a gentle reproof, because it was his zeal that carried him beyond the bounds of discretion. Christ did not aggravate the matter, only bade him *do so no more*. Many think their being in grief and distress will excuse them if they be hot and hasty with those about them; but Christ has here set us an example of meekness in sufferings. Peter must put up his sword, for it was the *sword of the Spirit* that was to be committed to him—*weapons of warfare not carnal, yet mighty*. When Christ with a word felled the aggressors, he showed Peter how he should be armed with a *word, quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword*, and with that, not long after this, he laid Ananias and Sapphira dead at his feet.

3. The reason for this rebuke: *The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?* Matthew relates another reason which Christ gave for this rebuke, but John preserves this, which he had omitted; in which Christ gives us, (1.) A full proof of

his own submission to his Father's will. Of all that was amiss in what Peter did, he seems to resent nothing so much as that he would have hindered his sufferings now that his *hour was come*: "What, Peter, wilt thou step in between the cup and the lip? *Get thee hence, Satan.*" If Christ be determined to suffer and die, it is presumption for Peter in word or deed to oppose it: *Shall I not drink it?* The manner of expression bespeaks a settled resolution, and that he would not entertain a thought to the contrary. He was willing to drink of this cup, though it was a bitter cup, an infusion of the wormwood and the gall, the cup of trembling, a bloody cup, the *dregs of the cup of the Lord's wrath*, Isa. li. 22. He drank it, that he might put into our hands the cup of salvation, the cup of consolation, the cup of blessing; and therefore he is willing to drink it, because *his Father put it into his hand*. If his Father will have it so, it is for the best, and be it so. (2.) A fair pattern to us of submission to God's will in every thing that concerns us. We must *pledge* Christ in the cup that he drank of (Matt. xx. 23), and must argue ourselves into a compliance. [1.] It is but a *cup*; a small matter comparatively, be it what it will. It is not a sea, a red sea, a dead sea, for it is not hell; it is light, and but for a moment. [2.] It is a cup that is given us; sufferings are gifts. [3.] It is given us by a Father, who has a Father's authority, and does us no wrong; a Father's affection, and means us no hurt.

VI. Having entirely reconciled himself to the dispensation, he calmly surrendered, and yielded himself a prisoner, not because he could not have made his escape, but because he would not. One would have thought the cure of Malchus's ear should have made them relent, but nothing would win upon them. *Maledictus furor, quem nec majestas miraculi nec pietas beneficii confringere potuit—Accursed rage, which the grandeur of the miracle could not appease, nor the tenderness of the favour conciliate.*—Anselm. Observe here,

1. How they seized him: *They took Jesus*. Only some few of them could lay hands on him, but it is charged upon them all, for they were all aiding and abetting. In treason there are no accessaries; all are principals. Now the scripture was fulfilled, *Bulls have compassed me* (Ps. xxii. 12), *compassed me like bees*, Ps. cxviii. 12. *The breath of our nostrils is taken in their pit*, Lam. iv. 20. They had so often been frustrated in their attempts to seize him that now, having got him into their hands, we may suppose they flew upon him with so much the more violence.

2. How they secured him: *They bound him*. This particular of his sufferings is taken notice of only by this evangelist, that, as soon as ever he was taken, he was bound, pinioned, handcuffed; tradition says, "They bound him with such cruelty that the blood started out at his fingers' ends; and, having bound

his hands behind him, they clapped an iron chain about his neck, and with that dragged him along." See *Gerhard. Harm.* cap. 5.

(1.) This shows the spite of his persecutors. They bound him, [1.] That they might torment him, and put him in pain, as they bound Samson to afflict him. [2.] That they might disgrace him, and put him to shame; slaves were bound, so was Christ, though free-born. [3.] That they might prevent his escape, Judas having told them to hold him fast. See their folly, that they should think to fetter that power which had but just now proved itself omnipotent. [4.] They bound him as one already condemned, for they were resolved to prosecute him to the death, and that he should die as a fool dieth, that is, as a malefactor, with his hands bound, 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34. Christ had bound the consciences of his persecutors with the power of his word, which galled them; and, to be revenged on him, they laid these bonds on him.

(2.) Christ's being bound was very significant; in this as in other things there was a mystery. [1.] Before they bound him, he had bound himself by his own undertaking to the work and office of a Mediator. He was already bound to the horns of the altar with the cords of his own love to man, and duty to his Father, else their cords would not have held him. [2.] We were *bound with the cords of our iniquities* (Prov. v. 22), with the *yoke of our transgressions*, Lam. i. 14. Guilt is a bond on the soul, by which we are bound over to the judgment of God; corruption is a bond on the soul, by which we are bound under the power of Satan. Christ, being made sin for us, to free us from those bonds, himself submitted to be bound for us, else we had been bound hand and foot, and reserved in chains of darkness. To his bonds we owe our liberty; his confinement was our enlargement; thus the Son maketh us free. [3.] The types and prophecies of the Old Testament were herein accomplished. Isaac was bound, that he might be sacrificed; Joseph was bound, and the *irons entered into his soul*, in order to his being brought from prison to reign, Ps. cv. 18, &c. Samson was bound in order to his slaying more of the Philistines at his death than he had done in his life. And the Messiah was prophesied of as a prisoner, Isa. liii. 8. [4.] Christ was bound, that he might bind us to duty and obedience. His bonds for us are bonds upon us, by which we are for ever obliged to love him and serve him. Paul's salutation to his friends is Christ's to us all: "*Remember my bonds* (Col. iv. 18), remember them as bound with him from all sin, and to all duty." [5.] Christ's bonds for us were designed to make our bonds for him easy to us, if at any time we be so called out to suffer for him, to sanctify and sweeten them, and put honour upon them; these enabled Paul and Silas to sing in the stocks, and Ignatius to call his bonds for Christ spiritual pearls.—*Epist. ad Ephes.*

13 And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. 14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. 15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so *did* another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. 16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. 17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. 18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. 19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. 20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. 21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. 22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? 23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? 24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. 25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? He denied *it*, and said, I am not. 26 One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? 27 Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

We have here an account of Christ's ar-  
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raiment before the high priest, and some circumstances that occurred therein which were omitted by the other evangelists; and Peter's denying him, which the other evangelists had given the story of entire by itself, is interwoven with the other passages. The crime laid to his charge having relation to religion, the judges of the spiritual court took it to fall directly under their cognizance. Both Jews and Gentiles seized him; and so both Jews and Gentiles tried and condemned him, for he died for the sins of both. Let us go over the story in order.

I. Having seized him, they *led him away to Annas first*, before they brought him to the court that was sat, expecting him, in the house of Caiaphas, *v. 13.* 1. They *led him away*, led him in triumph, as a trophy of their victory; *led him as a lamb to the slaughter*, and they led him through the sheep-gate spoken of *Neh. iii. 1.* For through that they went from the mount of Olives into Jerusalem. They hurried him away with violence, as if he had been the worst and vilest of malefactors. We had been led away of our own impetuous lusts, and led captive by Satan at his will, and, that we might be rescued, Christ was led away, led captive by Satan's agents and instruments. 2. They led him away to their masters that sent them. It was now about midnight, and one would think they should have put him in ward (*Lev. xxiv. 12*), should have led him to some prison, till it was a proper time to call a court; but he is hurried away immediately, not to the justices of peace, to be committed, but to the judges to be condemned; so extremely violent was the prosecution, partly because they feared a rescue, which they would thus not only leave no time for, but give a terror to; partly because they greedily thirsted after Christ's blood, *as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.* 3. They led him to Annas first. Probably his house lay in the way, and was convenient for them to call at to refresh themselves, and, as some think, to be paid for their service. I suppose Annas was old and infirm, and could not be present in council with the rest at that time of night, and yet earnestly desired to see the prey. To gratify him therefore with the assurance of their success, that the old man might sleep the better, and to receive his blessing for it, they produce their prisoner before him. It is sad to see those that are old and sickly, when they cannot commit sin as formerly, taking pleasure in those that do. Dr. Lightfoot thinks Annas was not present, because he had to attend early that morning in the temple, to examine the sacrifices which were that day to be offered, whether they were without blemish: if so, there was a significance in it, that Christ, the great sacrifice, was presented to him, and sent away bound, as approved and ready for the altar. 4. This Annas was father-in-law to Caiaphas the high priest; this kindred by marriage between

them comes in as a reason either why Caiaphas ordered that this piece of respect should be done to Annas, to favour him with the first sight of the prisoner, or why Annas was willing to countenance Caiaphas in a matter his heart was so much upon. Note, Acquaintance and alliance with wicked people are a great confirmation to many in their wicked ways.

II. Annas did not long detain them, being as willing as any of them to have the prosecution pushed on, and therefore sent him bound to Caiaphas, to his house, which was appointed for the rendezvous of the sanhedrim upon this occasion, or to the usual place in the temple where the high priest kept his court; this is mentioned, *v. 24.* But our translators intimate in the margin that it should come in here, and, accordingly, read it there, *Annas had sent him.* Observe here,

1. The power of Caiaphas intimated (*v. 13*). He was *high priest that same year.* The high priest's commission was during life; but there were now such frequent changes, by the Simoniacal artifices of aspiring men with the government, that it was become almost an annual office, a presage of its final period approaching; while they were undermining one another, God was overturning them all, that he might come whose right it was. Caiaphas was high priest that same year when Messiah was to be cut off, which intimates, (1.) That when a bad thing was to be done by a high priest, according to the foreknowledge of God, Providence so ordered it that a bad man should be in the chair to do it. (2.) That, when God would make it to appear what corruption there was in the heart of a bad man, he put him into a place of power, where he had temptation and opportunity to exert it. It was the ruin of Caiaphas that he was high priest that year, and so became a ringleader in the putting of Christ to death. Many a man's advancement has lost him his reputation, and he had not been dishonoured if he had not been preferred.

2. The malice of Caiaphas, which is intimated (*v. 14*) by the repeating of what he had said some time before, that, right or wrong, guilty or innocent, *it was expedient that one man should die for the people*, which refers to the story *ch. xi. 50.* This comes in here to show, (1.) What a bad man he was; this was that Caiaphas that governed himself and the church by rules of policy, in defiance of the rules of equity. (2.) What ill usage Christ was likely to meet with in his court, when his case was adjudged before it was heard, and they were already resolved what to do with him; *he must die*; so that his trial was a jest. Thus the enemies of Christ's gospel are resolved, true or false, to run it down. (3.) It is a testimony to the innocence of our Lord Jesus, from the mouth of one of his worst enemies, who owned that he fell a sacrifice to the public good, and that it

was not just he should die, but *expedient* only.

3. The concurrence of Annas in the prosecution of Christ. He made himself a partaker in guilt, (1.) With the captain and officers, that without law or mercy had bound him; for he approved it by continuing him bound when he should have loosed him, he not being convicted of any crime, nor having attempted an escape. If we do not what we can to undo what others have ill done, we are accessaries *ex post facto*—*after the fact*. It was more excusable in the rude soldiers to bind him than in Annas, who should have known better, to continue him bound. (2.) With the chief priest and council that condemned him, and prosecuted him to death. This Annas was not present with them, yet thus he wished them *good speed*, and became a *partaker of their evil deeds*.

III. In the house of Caiaphas, Simon Peter began to deny his Master, *v. 15*—*18*.

1. It was with much ado that Peter got into the hall where the court was sitting, an account of which we have *v. 15, 16*. Here we may observe,

(1.) Peter's kindness to Christ, which (though it proved no kindness) appeared in two things:—[1.] That he *followed Jesus* when he was *led away*; though at first he fled with the rest, yet afterwards he took heart a little, and followed at some distance, calling to mind the promises he had made to adhere to him, whatever it should cost him. Those that had followed Christ in the midst of his honours, and shared with him in those honours, when the people cried Hosanna to him, ought to have followed him now in the midst of his reproaches, and to have shared with him in these. Those that truly love and value Christ will follow him all weathers and all ways. [2.] When he could not get in where Jesus was in the midst of his enemies, he *stood at the door without*, willing to be as near him as he could, and waiting for an opportunity to get nearer. Thus when we meet with opposition in following Christ we must show our good-will. But yet this kindness of Peter's was no kindness, because he had not strength and courage enough to persevere in it, and so, as it proved, he did but run himself into a snare: and even his following Christ, considering all things, was to be blamed, because Christ, who knew him better than he knew himself, had expressly told him (*ch. xiii. 36*), *Whither I go thou canst not follow me now*, and had told him again and again that he would deny him; and he had lately had experience of his own weakness in forsaking him. Note, We must take heed of tempting God by running upon difficulties beyond our strength, and venturing too far in a way of suffering. If our call be clear to expose ourselves, we may hope that God will enable us to honour him; but, if it be not, we may fear that God will leave us to shame ourselves.

(2.) The other disciple's kindness to Peter, which yet, as it proved, was no kindness neither. St. John several times in this gospel speaking of himself as another disciple, many interpreters have been led by this to fancy that this other disciple here was John; and many conjectures they have how he should come to be known to the high-priest; *propter generis nobilitatem*—*being of superior birth*, saith *Jerome, Epitaph. Marcel.*, as if he were a better gentleman born than his brother James, when they were both the sons of Zebedee the fisherman: some will tell you that he had sold his estate to the high priest, others that he supplied his family with fish, both which are very improbable. But I see no reason to think that this other disciple was John, or one of the twelve; other sheep Christ had, which were not of the fold; and this might be, as the Syriac reads it, *unus ex discipulis aliis*—*one of those other disciples* that believed in Christ, but resided at Jerusalem, and kept their places there; perhaps Joseph of Arimathea, or Nicodemus, known to the high priest, but not known to him to be disciples of Christ. Note, As there are many who seem disciples and are not so, so there are many who are disciples and seem not so. There are good people hid in courts, even in Nero's, as well as hid in crowds. We must not conclude a man to be no friend to Christ merely because he has acquaintance and conversation with those that were his known enemies. Now, [1.] This other disciple, whoever he was, showed a respect to Peter, in introducing him, not only to gratify his curiosity and affection, but to give him an opportunity of being serviceable to his Master upon his trial, if there were occasion. Those that have a real kindness for Christ and his ways, though their temper may be reserved and their circumstances may lead them to be cautious and retired, yet, if their faith be sincere, they will discover, when they are called to it, which way their inclination lies, by being ready to do a professed disciple a good turn. Peter perhaps had formerly introduced this disciple into conversation with Christ, and now he requites his kindness, and is not ashamed to own him, though, it should seem, he had at this time but a poor downcast appearance. [2.] But this kindness proved no kindness, nay a great diskindness; by letting him into the high priest's hall, he let him into temptation, and the consequence was bad. Note, The courtesies of our friends often prove a snare to us, through a misguided affection.

2. Peter, having got in, was immediately assaulted with the temptation, and foiled by it, *v. 17*. Observe here,

(1.) How slight the attack was. It was but a silly maid, of so small account that she was set to keep the door, that challenged him, and she only asked him carelessly, *Art not thou one of this man's disciples?* probably suspecting it by his sheepish look, and coming in timorously.



We should many a time better maintain a good cause if we had a *good heart on it*, and could put a *good face on it*. Peter would have had some reason to take the alarm if Malchus had set upon him, and had said, "This is he that cut off my ear, and I will have his head for it;" but when a maid only asked him, *Art not thou one of them?* he might without danger have answered, *And what if I am?* Suppose the servants had ridiculed him, and insulted over him, upon it, those can bear but little for Christ that cannot bear this; this is but *running with the footmen*.

(2.) How speedy the surrender was. Without taking time to recollect himself, he suddenly answered, *I am not*. If he had had the boldness of the lion, he would have said, "It is my honour that I am so;" or, if he had had the wisdom of the serpent, he would have kept silence at this time, for it was an evil time. But, all his care being for his own safety, he thought he could not secure this but by a peremptory denial: *I am not*; he not only denies it, but even disdains it, and scorns her words.

(3.) Yet he goes further into the temptation: *And the servants and officers stood there, and Peter with them, v. 18.*

[1.] See how the servants made much of themselves; the night being cold, they made a fire in the hall, not for their masters (they were so eager in persecuting Christ that they forgot cold), but for themselves to refresh themselves. They cared not what became of Christ; all their care was to sit and warm themselves, Amos vi. 6.

[2.] See how Peter herded himself with them, and made one among them. *He sat and warmed himself*. First, It was a fault bad enough that he did not attend his Master, and appear for him at the upper end of the hall, where he was now under examination. He might have been a witness for him, and have confronted the false witnesses that swore against him, if his Master had called him; at least, he might have been a witness to him, might have taken an exact notice of what passed, that he might relate it to the other disciples, who could none of them get in to hear the trial; he might have learned by his Master's example how to carry himself when it should come to his turn to suffer thus; yet neither his conscience nor his curiosity could bring him into the court, but he sits by, as if, like Gallio, he cared for none of these things. And yet at the same time we have reason to think his heart was as full of grief and concern as it could hold, but he had not the courage to own it. *Lord, lead us not into temptation*. Secondly, It was much worse that he joined himself with those that were his Master's enemies: *He stood with them, and warmed himself*; this was a poor excuse for joining with them. A little thing will draw those into bad company that will be drawn to it by the love of a good fire. If

Peter's zeal for his Master had not frozen, but had continued in the heat it seemed to be of but a few hours before, he had not had occasion to warm himself now. Peter was much to be blamed, 1. Because he associated with these wicked men, and kept company with them. Doubtless they were diverting themselves with this night's expedition, scoffing at Christ, at what he had said, at what he had done, and triumphing in their victory over him; and what sort of entertainment would this give to Peter? If he said as they said, or by silence gave consent, he involved himself in sin; if not, he exposed himself to danger. If Peter had not so much courage as to appear publicly for his Master, yet he might have had so much devotion as to retire into a corner, and weep in secret for his Master's sufferings, and his own sin in forsaking him; if he could not have done good, he might have kept out of the way of doing hurt. It is better to abscond than appear to no purpose, or bad purpose. 2. Because he desired to be thought *one of them*, that he might not be suspected to be a disciple of Christ. Is this Peter? What a contradiction is this to the prayer of every good man, *Gather not my soul with sinners!* *Saul among the prophets* is not so absurd as David among the Philistines. Those that deprecate the lot of the scornful hereafter should dread the *seat of the scornful* now. It is ill warming ourselves with those with whom we are in danger of burning ourselves, Ps. cxli. 4.

IV. Peter, Christ's friend, having begun to deny him, the high priest, his enemy, begins to accuse him, or rather urges him to accuse himself, v. 19—21. It should seem, the first attempt was to prove him a seducer, and a teacher of false doctrine, which this evangelist relates; and, when they failed in the proof of this, then they charged him with blasphemy, which is related by the other evangelists, and therefore omitted here. Observe,

1. The articles or heads upon which Christ was examined (v. 19): concerning *his disciples and his doctrine*. Observe,

(1.) The irregularity of the process; it was against all law and equity. They seize him as a criminal, and now that he is their prisoner they have nothing to *lay to his charge*; no libel, no prosecutor; but the judge himself must be the prosecutor, and the prisoner himself the witness, and, against all reason and justice, he is put on to be his own accuser.

(2.) The intention. The *high priest then* (*οὗν*—therefore, which seems to refer to v. 14), because he had resolved that Christ must be sacrificed to their private malice under colour of the public good, examined him upon those interrogatories which would touch his life. He examined him, [1.] Concerning his disciples, that he might charge him with sedition, and represent him as dan-

gerous to the Roman government, as well as to the Jewish church. He asked him who were his disciples—what number they were—of what country—what were their names and characters, insinuating that his scholars were designed for soldiers, and would in time become a formidable body. Some think his question concerning his disciples was, “What is now become of them all? Where are they? Why do they not appear?” upbraiding him with their cowardice in deserting him, and thus adding to the affliction of it. There was something significant in this, that Christ’s calling and owning his disciples was the first thing laid to his charge, for it was *for their sakes* that he *sanctified himself* and suffered. [2.] Concerning his doctrine, that they might charge him with heresy, and bring him under the penalty of the law against false prophets, Deut. xiii. 9, 10. This was a matter properly cognizable in that court (Deut. xvii. 12), therefore a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem, where that court sat. They could not prove any false doctrine upon him; but they hoped to extort something from him which they might distort to his prejudice, and to make him an offender for some word or other, Isa. xxix. 21. They said nothing to him concerning his miracles, by which he had done so much good, and proved his doctrine beyond contradiction, because of these they were sure they could take no hold. Thus the adversaries of Christ, while they are industriously quarrelling with his truth, willfully shut their eyes against the evidences of it, and take no notice of them.

2. The appeal Christ made, in answer to these interrogatories. (1.) As to his disciples, he said nothing, because it was an impertinent question; if his doctrine was sound and good, his having disciples to whom to communicate it was no more than what was practised and allowed by their own doctors. If Caiaphas, in asking him concerning his disciples, designed to ensnare them, and bring them into trouble, it was in kindness to them that Christ said nothing of them, for he had said, *Let these go their way*. If he meant to upbraid him with their cowardice, no wonder that he said nothing, for

Rudet hæc opprobria nobis,  
Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli—

Shame attaches when charges are exhibited that cannot be refuted:

he would say nothing to condemn them, and could say nothing to justify them. (2.) As to his doctrine, he said nothing in particular, but in general referred himself to those that heard him, being not only made manifest to God, but made manifest also in their consciences, v. 20, 21.

[1.] He tacitly charges his judges with illegal proceedings. He does not indeed speak evil of the rulers of the people, nor say now to these princes, *You are wicked*; but he appeals to the settled rules of their own court, whether they dealt fairly by him. *Do*

*you indeed judge righteously?* Ps. lviii. 1. So here, *Why ask you me?* Which implies two absurdities in judgment: *First*, “*Why ask you me now concerning my doctrine, when you have already condemned it?*” They had made an order of court for excommunicating all that owned him (ch. ix. 22), had issued out a proclamation for apprehending him; and now they come to ask what his doctrine is! Thus was he condemned, as his doctrine and cause commonly are, unheard. *Secondly*, “*Why ask you me?* Must I accuse myself, when you have no evidence against me?”

[2.] He insists upon his fair and open dealing with them in the publication of his doctrine, and justifies himself with this. The crime which the sanhedrim by the law was to enquire after was the clandestine spreading of dangerous doctrines, enticing secretly, Deut. xiii. 6. As to this, therefore, Christ clears himself very fully. *First*, As to the manner of his preaching. He spoke openly, *παρρησία*—with freedom and plainness of speech; he did not deliver things ambiguously, as Apollo did his oracles. Those that would undermine the truth, and spread corrupt notions, seek to accomplish their purpose by sly insinuations, putting queries, starting difficulties, and asserting nothing; but Christ explained himself fully, with, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*; his reproofs were free and bold, and his testimonies express against the corruptions of the age. *Secondly*, As to the persons he preached to: *He spoke to the world*, to all that had ears to hear, and were willing to hear him, high or low, learned or unlearned, Jew or Gentile, friend or foe. His doctrine feared not the censure of a mixed multitude; nor did he grudge the knowledge of it to any (as the masters of some rare invention commonly do), but freely communicated it, as the sun does his beams. *Thirdly*, As to the places he preached in. When he was in the country, he preached ordinarily in the synagogues—the places of meeting for worship, and on the sabbath-day—the time of meeting; when he came up to Jerusalem, he preached the same doctrine in the temple at the time of the solemn feasts, when the Jews from all parts assembled there; and though he often preached in private houses, and on mountains, and by the sea-side, to show that his word and worship were not to be confined to temples and synagogues, yet what he preached in private was the very same with what he delivered publicly. Note, The doctrine of Christ, purely and plainly preached, needs not be ashamed to appear in the most numerous assembly, for it carries its own strength and beauty along with it. What Christ’s faithful ministers say they would be willing all the world should hear. Wisdom cries in the places of concourse, Prov. i. 21; viii. 3; ix. 3. *Fourthly*, As to the doctrine itself. He said nothing in secret contrary to what he said in public, but only by way of



repetition and explication: *In secret have I said nothing*; as if he had been either suspicious of the truth of it, or conscious of any ill design in it. He sought no corners, for he feared no colours, nor said any thing that he needed to be ashamed of; what he did speak in private to his disciples he ordered them to proclaim on the house-tops, Matt. x. 27. God saith of himself (Isa. xlv. 19), *I have not spoken in secret*; his commandment is not hidden, Deut. xxx. 11. And the righteousness of faith speaks in like manner, Rom. x. 6. *Veritas nihil metuit nisi abscondi—truth fears nothing but concealment.*—Tertullian.

[3.] He appeals to those that had heard him, and desires that they might be examined what doctrine he had preached, and whether it had that dangerous tendency that was surmised: "*Ask those that heard me what I said unto them*; some of them may be in court, or may be sent for out of their beds." He means not his friends and followers, who might be presumed to speak in his favour, but, Ask any impartial hearer; ask your own officers. Some think he pointed to them, when he said, *Behold, they know what I said*, referring to the report which they had made of his preaching (ch. vii. 46), *Never man spoke like this man*. Nay, you may ask some upon the bench; for it is probable that some of them had heard him, and had been put to silence by him. Note, The doctrine of Christ may safely appeal to all that know it, and has so much right and reason on its side that those who will judge impartially cannot but witness to it.

V. While the judges were examining him, the servants that stood by were abusing him, v. 22, 23.

1. It was a base affront which one of the officers gave him; though he spoke with so much calmness and convincing evidence, this insolent fellow *struck him with the palm of his hand*, probably on the side of his head or face, saying, *Answerest thou the high priest so?* as if he had behaved himself rudely to the court.

(1.) *He struck him*, ἔδωκε ῥάπισμα—he gave him a blow. Some think it signifies a blow with a rod or wand, from ῥάβδος, or with the staff which was the badge of his office. Now the scripture was fulfilled (Isa. l. 6), *I gave my cheeks, εἰς ῥάπισμα* (so the LXX.) *to blows*, the word here used. And Mic. v. 1, *They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek*; and the type answered (Job xvi. 10), *They have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully*. It was unjust to strike one that neither said nor did amiss; it was insolent for a mean servant to strike one that was confessedly a person of account; it was cowardly to strike one that had his hands tied; and barbarous to strike a prisoner at the bar. Here was a breach of the peace in the face of the court, and yet the judges countenanced it. Confusion of face was our due;

but Christ here took it to himself: "Upon me be the curse, the shame."

(2.) He checked him in a haughty imperious manner: *Answerest thou the high priest so?* As if the blessed Jesus were not good enough to speak to his master, or not wise enough to know how to speak to him, but, like a rude and ignorant prisoner, must be controlled by the jailor, and taught how to behave. Some of the ancients suggest that this officer was Malchus, who owed to Christ the healing of his ear, and the saving of his head, and yet made him this ill return. But, whoever it was, it was done to please the high priest, and to curry favour with him; for what he said implied a jealousy for the dignity of the high priest. Wicked rulers will not want wicked servants, who will help forward the affliction of those whom their masters persecute. There was a successor of this high priest that commanded the bystanders to smite Paul thus *on the mouth* Acts xxiii. 2. Some think this officer took himself to be affronted by Christ's appeal to those about him concerning his doctrine, as if he would have vouched him to be a witness; and perhaps he was one of those officers that had spoken honourably of him (ch. vii. 46), and, lest he should now be thought a secret friend to him, he thus appears a bitter enemy.

2. Christ bore this affront with wonderful meekness and patience (v. 23): "*If I have spoken evil*, in what I have now said, *bear witness of the evil*. Observe it to the court, and let them judge of it, who are the proper judges; but if well, and as it did become me, *why smitest thou me?*" Christ could have answered him with a miracle of wrath, could have struck him dumb or dead, or have withered the hand that was lifted up against him. But this was the day of his patience and suffering, and he answered him with the *meekness of wisdom*, to teach us not to avenge ourselves, not to render railing for railing, but with the *innocency of the dove* to bear injuries, even when with the *wisdom of the serpent*, as our Saviour, we show the injustice of them, and appeal to the magistrate concerning them. Christ did not here *turn the other cheek*, by which it appears that that rule, Matt. v. 39, is not to be understood literally; a man may possibly *turn the other cheek*, and yet have his heart full of malice; but, comparing Christ's precept with his pattern, we learn, (1.) That in such cases we must not be our own avengers, nor judges in our own cause. We must rather receive than give the second blow, which makes the quarrel; we are allowed to defend ourselves, but not to avenge ourselves: the magistrate (if it be necessary for the preserving of the public peace, and the restraining and terrifying of evil-doers) is to be the avenger, Rom. xiii. 4. (2.) Our resentment of injuries done us must always be rational, and never passionated; such Christ's here was; *when he*

suffered, he reasoned, but *threatened not*. He fairly expostulated with him that did him the injury, and so may we. (3.) When we are called out to suffering, we must *accommodate ourselves* to the inconveniences of a suffering state, with patience, and by one indignity done us be prepared to receive another, and to make the best of it.

VI. While the servants were thus abusing him, Peter was proceeding to deny him, v. 25—27. It is a sad story, and none of the least of Christ's sufferings.

1. He repeated the sin the second time, v. 25. While he was warming himself with the servants, as one of them, they asked him, *Art not thou one of his disciples?* What dost thou here among us? He, perhaps, hearing that Christ was examined about his disciples, and fearing he should be seized, or at least smitten, as his Master was, if he should own it, flatly denied it, and said, *I am not*.

(1.) It was his great folly to thrust himself into the temptation, by continuing in the company of those that were unsuitable for him, and that he had nothing to do with. He staid to warm himself; but those that warm themselves with evil doers grow cold towards good people and good things, and those that are fond of the devil's fire-side are in danger of the devil's fire. Peter might have stood by his Master at the bar, and have warmed himself better than here, at the fire of his Master's love, which *many waters could not quench*, Cant. viii. 6, 7. He might there have warmed himself with zeal for his Master, and indignation at his persecutors; but he chose rather to warm with them than to warm against them. But how could one (one disciple) be warm alone? Eccl. iv. 11.

(2.) It was his great unhappiness that he was again assaulted by the temptation; and no other could be expected, for this was a place, this an hour, of temptation. When the judge asked Christ about his disciples, probably the servants took the hint, and challenged Peter for one of them, "Answer to thy name." See here, [1.] The subtlety of the tempter in running down one whom he saw falling, and mustering a greater force against him; not a maid now, but all the servants. Note, Yielding to one temptation invites another, and perhaps a stronger. Satan redoubles his attacks when we give ground. [2.] The danger of bad company. We commonly study to approve ourselves to those with whom we choose to associate; we value ourselves upon their good word and covet to stand right in their opinion. As we choose our people we choose our praise, and govern ourselves accordingly; we are therefore concerned to make the first choice well, and not to mingle with those whom we cannot please without displeasing God.

(3.) It was his great weakness, nay, it was his great wickedness, to yield to the temptation, and to say, *I am not one of his disciples*, as one ashamed of that which was his honour,

and afraid of suffering for it, which would have been yet more his honour. See how the *fear of man brings a snare*. When Christ was admired, and caressed, and treated with respect, Peter pleased himself, and perhaps prided himself, in this, that he was a disciple of Christ, and so put in for a share in the honours done to his Master. Thus many who seem fond of the reputation of religion when it is in fashion are ashamed of the reproach of it; but we must take it *for better and worse*.

2. He repeated the sin the third time, v. 26, 27. Here he was attacked by one of the servants, who was kinsman to Malchus, who, when he heard Peter deny himself to be a disciple of Christ, gave him the lie with great assurance: "*Did not I see thee in the garden with him?*" Witness my kinsman's ear." Peter then denied again, as if he knew nothing of Christ, nothing of the garden, nothing of all this matter.

(1.) This third assault of the temptation was more close than the former: before his relation to Christ was only suspected, here it is proved upon him by one that saw him with Jesus, and saw him draw his sword in his defence. Note, Those who by sin think to help themselves out of trouble do but entangle and embarrass themselves the more. Dare to be brave, for truth will out. *A bird of the air* may perhaps *tell the matter* which we seek to conceal with a lie. Notice is taken of this servant's being akin to Malchus, because this circumstance would make it the more a terror to Peter. "Now," thinks he, "I am gone, my business is done, there needs no other witness nor prosecutor." We should not make any man in particular our enemy if we can help it, because the time may come when either he or some of his relations may have us at their mercy. He that may need a friend should not make a foe. But observe, though here was sufficient evidence against Peter, and sufficient provocation given by his denial to have prosecuted him, yet he escapes, has no harm done him nor attempted to be done. Note, We are often drawn into sin by groundless causeless fears, which there is no occasion for, and which a small degree of wisdom and resolution would make nothing of.

(2.) His yielding to it was no less base than the former: *He denied again*. See here, [1.] The nature of sin in general: *the heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of it*, Heb. iii. 13. It was a strange degree of effrontery that Peter had arrived to on a sudden, that he could with such assurance stand in a lie against so clear a disproof; but *the beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water*, when once the fence is broken men easily go from bad to worse. [2.] Of the sin of lying in particular; it is a fruitful sin, and upon this account *exceedingly sinful*: one lie needs another to support it, and that another. It is a rule in the devil's politics, *Malè facta malè factis tegere, ne perpluant*—To cover sin with sin, in order to escape detection.



(3.) The hint given him for the awakening of his conscience was seasonable and happy: *Immediately the cock crew*; and this is all that is here said of his repentance, it being recorded by the other evangelists. This brought him to himself, by bringing to his mind the words of Christ. See here, [1.] The care Christ has of those that are his, notwithstanding their follies; though *they fall, they are not utterly cast down*, not utterly cast off. [2.] The advantage of having faithful remembrancers near us, who, though they cannot tell us more than we know already, yet may remind us of that which we know, but have forgotten. The crowing of the cock to others was an accidental thing, and had no significance; but to Peter it was the voice of God, and had a blessed tendency to awaken his conscience, by putting him in mind of the word of Christ.

28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. 29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? 30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. 31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: 32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die. 33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? 34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? 35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? 36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. 37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into

the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. 38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*. 39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover; will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

We have here an account of Christ's arraignment before Pilate, the Roman governor, in the *prætorium* (a Latin word made Greek), the prætor's house, or *hall of judgment*; thither they hurried him, to get him condemned in the Roman court, and executed by the Roman power. Being resolved on his death, they took this course, 1. That he might be put to death the more legally and regularly, according to the present constitution of their government, since they became a province of the empire; not stoned in a popular tumult, as Stephen, but put to death with the present formalities of justice. Thus he was treated as a malefactor, *being made sin for us*. 2. That he might be put to death the more safely. If they could engage the Roman government in the matter, which the people stood in awe of, there would be little danger of an uproar. 3. That he might be put to death with more reproach to himself. *The death of the cross*, which the Romans commonly used, being of all deaths the most ignominious, they were desirous by it to put an indelible mark of infamy upon him, and so to sink his reputation for ever. This therefore they harped upon, *Crucify him*. 4. That he might be put to death with less reproach to them. It was an invidious thing to put one to death that had done so much good in the world, and therefore they were willing to throw the odium upon the Roman government, to make that the less acceptable to the people, and save themselves from the reproach. Thus many are more afraid of the scandal of a bad action than of the sin of it. See Acts v. 28. Two things are here observed concerning the prosecution:—(1.) Their policy and industry in the prosecution: *It was early*; some think about two or three in the morning, others about five or six, when most people were in their beds; and so there would be the less danger of opposition from the people that were for Christ; while, at the same time, they had their agents about, to call those together whom they could influence to cry out against him. See how much their heart was upon it, and how violent they were in the prosecution. Now that they had him in their hands, they would lose no time till

they had him upon the cross, but denied themselves their natural rest, to push on this matter. See Mic. ii. 1. (2.) Their superstition and vile hypocrisy: *The chief priests and elders*, though they came along with the prisoner, that the thing might be done effectually, *went not into the judgment-hall*, because it was the house of an uncircumcised Gentile, *lest they should be defiled*, but kept out of doors, *that they might eat the passover*, not the paschal lamb (that was eaten the night before) but the passover-feast, upon the sacrifices which were offered on the fifteenth day, *the Chagigah*, as they called it, the passover-bullocks spoken of Deut. xvi. 2; 2 Chron. xxx. 24; xxxv. 8, 9. These they were to eat of, and therefore would not go into the court, for fear of touching a Gentile, and thereby contracting, not a legal, but only a traditional pollution. This they scrupled, but made no scruple of breaking through all the laws of equity to persecute Christ to the death. *They strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel*. Let us now see what passed at the judgment-hall. Here is,

1. Pilate's conference with the prosecutors. They were called first, and stated what they had to say against the prisoner, as was very fit, v. 29—32.

1. The judge calls for the indictment. Because they would not come into the hall, *he went out to them* into the court before the house, to talk with them. Looking upon Pilate as a magistrate, that we may give every one his due, here are three things commendable in him:—(1.) His diligent and close application to business. If it had been upon a good occasion, it had been very well that he was willing to be called up early to the judgment-seat. Men in public trusts must not love their ease. (2.) His condescending to the humour of the people, and receding from the honour of his place to gratify their scruples. He might have said, "If they be so nice as not to come in to me, let them go home as they came;" by the same rule as we might say, "If the complainant scruple to take off his hat to the magistrate, let not his complaint be heard;" but Pilate insists not upon it, bears with them, and goes out to them; for, when it is for good, we should *become all things to all men*. (3.) His adherence to the rule of justice, in demanding the accusation, suspecting the prosecution to be malicious: "*What accusation bring you against this man?*" What is the crime you charge him with, and what proof have you of it? It was a law of nature, before Valerius Publicola made it a Roman law, *Ne quis indicta causa condemnetur*—No man should be condemned unheard. See Acts xxv. 16, 17. It is unreasonable to commit a man, without alleging some cause in the warrant, and much more to arraign a man when there is no bill of indictment found against him.

2. The prosecutors demand judgment against him upon a general surmise that he was a

criminal, not alleging, much less proving, any thing in particular *worthy of death or of bonds* (v. 30): *If he were not a malefactor, or evil-doer, we would not have delivered him to thee to be condemned*. This bespeaks them, (1.) Very rude and uncivil to Pilate, a company of ill-natured men, that affected to despise dominion. When Pilate was so complaisant to them as to come out to treat with them, yet they were to the highest degree out of humour with him. He put the most reasonable question to them that could be; but, if it had been the most absurd, they could not have answered him with more disdain. (2.) Very spiteful and malicious towards our Lord Jesus: right or wrong, they will have him to be a malefactor, and treated as one. We are to presume a man innocent till he is proved guilty, but they will presume him guilty who could prove himself innocent. They cannot say, "He is a traitor, a murderer, a felon, a breaker of the peace," but they say, "He is an evil-doer." He an evil-doer who *went about doing good*? Let those be called whom he has cured, and fed, and taught; whom he has rescued from devils, and raised from death: and let them be asked whether he be an evil-doer or no. Note, It is no new thing for the best of benefactors to be branded and run down as the worst of malefactors. (3.) Very proud and conceited of themselves, and their own judgment and justice, as if their delivering a man up, under the general character of a malefactor, were sufficient for the civil magistrate to ground a judicial sentence upon, than which what could be more haughty?

3. The judge remands him to their own court (v. 31): "*Take you him, and judge him according to your own law*, and do not trouble me with him." Now, (1.) Some think Pilate herein complimented them, acknowledging the remains of their power, and allowing them to exert it. Corporal punishment they might inflict, as *scourging in their synagogues*; whether capital or no is uncertain. "But," saith Pilate, "go as far as your law will allow you, and, if you go further, it shall be connived at." This he said, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, but unwilling to do them the service they required. (2.) Others think he bantered them, and upbraided them with their present state of weakness and subjection. They would be the sole judges of the guilt. "Pray," saith Pilate, "if you will be so, go on as you have begun; you have found him guilty by your own law, condemn him, if you dare, by your own law, to carry on the humour." Nothing is more absurd, nor more deserves to be exposed, than for those to pretend to dictate, and boast of their wisdom, who are weak and in subordinate stations, and whose lot it is to be dictated to. Some think Pilate here reflects upon the law of Moses, as if it allowed them what the Roman law would by no means allow—the judging of a man unheard. "It may be your law will



suffer such a thing, but ours will not." Thus, through their corruptious, the law of God was blasphemed; and so is his gospel too.

4. They disown any authority as judges, and (since it must be so) are content to be prosecutors. They now grow less insolent and more submissive, and own, "*It is not lawful for us to put any man to death*, whatever less punishment we may inflict, and this is a malefactor whom we would have the blood of."

(1.) Some think they had lost their power to give judgment in matters of life and death only by their own carelessness, and cowardly yielding to the darling iniquities of the age; so Dr. Lightfoot *ὁκ ἔστιν*—*It is not* in our power to pass sentence of death upon *any*, if we do, we shall have the mob about us immediately.

(2.) Others think their power was taken from them by the Romans, because they had not used it well, or because it was thought too great a trust to be lodged in the hands of a conquered and yet an unsubdued people. Their acknowledgment of this they designed for a compliment to Pilate, and to atone for their rudeness (v. 30), but it amounts to a full evidence that the *sceptre was departed from Judah*, and therefore that now the Messiah was come, Gen. xlix. 10. If the Jews have no power to *put any man to death*, where is the sceptre? Yet they ask not, *Where is the Shiloh?*

(3.) However, there was a providence in it, that either they should have no power to put any man to death, or should decline the exercise of it upon this occasion, *That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke, signifying what death he should die*, v. 32. Observe, [1.] In general, that even those who designed the defeating of Christ's sayings were, beyond their intention, made serviceable to the fulfilling of them by an overruling hand of God. *No word of Christ shall fall to the ground*; he can never either deceive or be deceived. Even the chief priests, while they persecuted him as a deceiver, had their spirit so directed as to help to prove him true, when we should think that by taking other measures they might have defeated his predictions. *Howbeit, they meant not so*, Isa. x. 7. [2.] Those sayings of Christ in particular were fulfilled which he had spoken concerning his own death. Two sayings of Christ concerning his death were fulfilled, by the Jews declining to judge him according to their law. First, He had said that he should be *delivered to the Gentiles*, and that *they should put him to death* (Matt. xx. 19; Mark x. 33; Luke xviii. 32, 33), and hereby that saying was fulfilled. Secondly, He had said that he should be crucified (Matt. xx. 19; xxvi. 2), *lifted up*, ch. iii. 14; xii. 32. Now, if they had judged him by their law, he had been stoned; burning, strangling, and beheading, were in some cases used among the Jews, but never cruci-

fying. It was therefore necessary that Christ should be put to death by the Romans, that, being *hanged upon a tree*, he might be *made a curse for us* (Gal. iii. 13), and *his hands and feet might be pierced*. As the Roman power had brought him to be born at Bethlehem, so now to die upon a cross, and both according to the scriptures. It is likewise determined concerning us, though not discovered to us, *what death we shall die*, which should free us from all disquieting cares about that matter. "Lord, what, and when, and how thou hast appointed."

II. Here is Pilate's conference with the prisoner, v. 33, &c., where we have,

1. The prisoner set to the bar. Pilate, after he had conferred with the chief priests at his door, entered into the hall, and called for Jesus to be brought in. He would not examine him in the crowd, where he might be disturbed by the noise, but ordered him to be brought *into the hall*; for he made no difficulty of going in among the Gentiles. We by sin were become liable to the judgment of God, and were to be brought before his bar; therefore *Christ, being made sin and a curse for us*, was arraigned as a criminal. Pilate entered into judgment with him, that God might not enter into judgment with us.

2. His examination. The other evangelists tell us that his accusers had laid it to his charge that *he perverted the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar*, and upon this he is examined.

(1.) Here is a question put to him, with a design to ensnare him and to find out something upon which to ground an accusation. "*Art thou the king of the Jews?*" ὁ βασιλεὺς—*that king of the Jews* who has been so much talked of and so long expected—Messiah the prince, art thou he? Dost thou pretend to be he? Dost thou call thyself, and wouldest thou be thought so?" For he was far from imagining that really he was so, or making a question of that. Some think Pilate asked this with an air of scorn and contempt: "What! art thou a king, who makest so mean a figure? Art thou the king of the Jews, by whom thou art thus hated and persecuted? Art thou king *de jure*—of right, while the emperor is only king *de facto*—in fact?" Since it could not be proved he ever said it, he would constrain him to say it now, that he might proceed upon his own confession.

(2.) Christ answers this question with another; not for evasion, but as an intimation to Pilate to consider what he did, and upon what grounds he went (v. 34): "*Sayest thou this thing of thyself*, from a suspicion arising in thy own breast, or did others tell it thee of me, and dost thou ask it only to oblige them?" [1.] "It is plain that thou hast no reason to say *this of thyself*." Pilate was bound by his office to take care of the interests of the Roman government, but he could not say that this was in any danger or suffered

any damage, from any thing our Lord Jesus had ever said or done. He never appeared in worldly pomp, never assumed any secular power, never acted as a judge or divider; never were any traitorous principles or practices objected to him, nor any thing that might give the least shadow of suspicion. [2.] "If others tell it thee of me, to incense thee against me, thou oughtest to consider who they are, and upon what principles they go, and whether those who represent me as an *enemy to Cæsar* are not really such themselves, and therefore use this only as a pretence to cover their malice, for, if so, the matter ought to be well weighed by a judge that would do justice." Nay, if Pilate had been as inquisitive as he ought to have been in this matter, he would have found that the true reason why the chief priests were outrageous against Jesus was because he did not set up a temporal kingdom in opposition to the Roman power; if he would have done this, and would have wrought miracles to bring the Jews out of the Roman bondage, as Moses did to bring them out of the Egyptian, they would have been so far from siding with the Romans against him that they would have made him their king, and have fought under him against the Romans; but, not answering this expectation of theirs, they charged that upon him of which they were themselves most notoriously guilty—disaffection to and design against the present government; and was such an information as this fit to be countenanced?

(3.) Pilate resents Christ's answer, and takes it very ill, v. 35. This is a direct answer to Christ's question, v. 34. [1.] Christ had asked him whether he spoke of himself. "No," says he; "*am I a Jew*, that thou suspectest me to be in the plot against thee? I know nothing of the Messiah, nor desire to know, and therefore interest not myself in the dispute who is the Messiah and who not; it is all alike to me." Observe with what disdain Pilate asks, *Am I a Jew?* The Jews were, upon many accounts, an honourable people; but, having corrupted the covenant of their God, he made them contemptible and base before all the people (Mal. ii. 8, 9), so that a man of sense and honour reckoned it a scandal to be counted a Jew. Thus good names often suffer for the sake of the bad men that wear them. It is sad that when a Turk is suspected of dishonesty he should ask, "What! do you take me for a Christian?" [2.] Christ had asked him whether others told him. "Yes," says he, "and those *thine own people*, who, one would think, should be biassed in favour of thee, and the priests, whose testimony, in *verbum sacerdotis*—on the word of a priest, ought to be regarded; and therefore I have nothing to do but to proceed upon their information." Thus Christ, in his religion, still suffers by those that are of his own nation, even the priests, that profess relation to him, out do

not live up to their profession. [3.] Christ had declined answering that question, *Art thou the king of the Jews?* And therefore Pilate puts another question to him more general, "*What hast thou done?*" What provocation hast thou given to thy own nation, and particularly the priests, to be so violent against thee? Surely there cannot be all this smoke without some fire, what is it?"

(4.) Christ, in his next reply, gives a more full and direct answer to Pilate's former question, *Art thou a king?* explaining in what sense he was a king, but not such a king as was any ways dangerous to the Roman government, not a secular king, for his interest was not supported by secular methods, v. 36. Observe,

[1.] An account of the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom: It is *not of this world*. It is expressed negatively to rectify the present mistakes concerning it; but the positive is implied, it is the *kingdom of heaven*, and belongs to another world. Christ is a king, and has a kingdom, but *not of this world*. *First*, Its rise is not from this world; the kingdoms of men arise out of the sea and the earth (Dan. vii. 3; Rev. xiii. 1, 11); but *the holy city comes down from God out of heaven*, Rev. xxii. 2. His kingdom is not by succession, election, or conquest, but by the immediate and special designation of the divine will and counsel. *Secondly*, Its nature is not worldly; it is a kingdom within men (Luke xvi. 21), set up in their hearts and consciences (Rom. xiv. 17), its riches spiritual, its powers spiritual, and *all its glory within*. The ministers of state in Christ's kingdom have not *the spirit of the world*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. *Thirdly*, Its guards and supports are not worldly; its weapons are spiritual. It neither needed nor used secular force to maintain and advance it, nor was it carried on in a way *hurtful to kings or provinces*; it did not in the least interfere with the prerogatives of princes nor the property of their subjects; it tended not to alter any national establishment in secular things, nor opposed any kingdom but that of sin and Satan. *Fourthly*, Its tendency and design are not worldly. Christ neither aimed nor would allow his disciples to aim at the pomp and power or *the great men of the earth*. *Fifthly*, Its subjects, though they are in the world, yet are *not of the world*; they are called *and chosen out of the world*, are born from, and bound for, another world; they are neither the world's pupils nor its darlings, neither governed by its wisdom nor enriched with its wealth.

[2.] An evidence of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom produced. If he had designed an opposition to the government, he would have fought them at their own weapons, and would have repelled force with force of the same nature; but he did not take this course: *If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I*



should not be delivered to the Jews, and my kingdom be ruined by them. But, *First*, His followers did not offer to fight; there was no uproar, no attempt to rescue him, though the town was now full of Galileans, his friends and countrymen, and they were generally armed; but the peaceable behaviour of his disciples on this occasion was enough to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. *Secondly*, He did not order them to fight; nay, he forbade them, which was an evidence both that he did not depend upon worldly aids (for he could have summoned legions of angels into his service, which showed that his kingdom was from above), and also that he did not dread worldly opposition, for he was very willing to be delivered to the Jews, as knowing that what would have been the destruction of any worldly kingdom would be the advancement and establishment of his; justly therefore does he conclude, *Now you may see my kingdom is not from hence*; in the world, but not of it.

(5.) In answer to Pilate's further query, he replies yet more directly, v. 37, where we have, [1.] Pilate's plain question: "*Art thou a king then?*" Thou speakest of a kingdom thou hast; art thou then, in any sense, a king? And what colour hast thou for such a claim? Explain thyself." [2.] The good confession which our Lord Jesus witnessed before Pontius Pilate, in answer to this (1 Tim. vi. 13): *Thou sayest that I am a king*, that is, *It is as thou sayest, I am a king*; for *I came to bear witness of the truth*. *First*, He grants himself to be a king, though not in the sense that Pilate meant. The Messiah was expected under the character of a king, *Messiah the prince*; and therefore, having owned to Caiaphas that he was the Christ, he would not disown to Pilate that he was a king, lest he should seem inconsistent with himself. Note, Though Christ took upon him the form of a servant, yet even then he justly claimed the honour and authority of a king. *Secondly*, He explains himself, and shows how he is a king, as *he came to bear witness of the truth*; he rules in the minds of men by the power of truth. If he had meant to declare himself a temporal prince, he would have said, *For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, to rule the nations, to conquer kings, and to take possession of kingdoms*; no, *he came to be a witness*, a witness for the God that made the world, and against sin that ruins the world, and by this word of his testimony he sets up, and keeps up, his kingdom. It was foretold that he should be *a witness to the people*, and, as such, *a leader and commander to the people*, Isa. lv. 4. Christ's kingdom was not of this world, in which truth faileth (Isa. lix. 15. *Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare—He that cannot dissemble knows not how to reign*), but of that world in which truth reigns eternally. Christ's errand into the world, and his business in the world, were to bear

witness to the truth. 1. To reveal it, to discover to the world that which otherwise could not have been known concerning God and his will and good-will to men, ch. i. 18; xvii. 26. 2. To confirm it, Rom. xv. 8. By his miracles *he bore witness to the truth* of religion, the truth of divine revelation, and of God's perfections and providence, and the truth of his promise and covenant, *that all men through him might believe*. Now by doing this he is a king, and sets up a kingdom. (1.) The foundation and power, the spirit and genius, of Christ's kingdom, is truth, divine truth. When he said, *I am the truth*, he said, in effect, *I am a king*. He conquers by the convincing evidence of truth; he rules by the commanding power of truth, and in his majesty rides prosperously, because of truth, Ps. xlv. 4. It is with his truth that he shall judge the people, Ps. xcvi. 13. It is the sceptre of his kingdom; *he draws with the cords of a man*, with truth revealed to us, and received by us in the love of it; and thus he brings thoughts into obedience. He came a light into the world, and rules as the sun by day. (2.) The subjects of this kingdom are those that are of the truth. All that by the grace of God are rescued from under the power of the father of lies, and are disposed to receive the truth and submit to the power and influence of it, will hear Christ's voice, will become his subjects, and will bear faith and true allegiance to him. Every one that has any real sense of true religion will entertain the Christian religion, and they belong to his kingdom; by the power of truth he makes them willing, Ps. cx. 3. All that are in love with truth will hear the voice of Christ, for greater, better, surer, sweeter truths can nowhere be found than are found in Christ, by whom *grace and truth came*; so that, by hearing Christ's voice, we know that we are of the truth, 1 John iii. 19.

(6.) Pilate, hereupon, puts a good question to him, but does not stay for an answer, v. 38. He said, *What is truth?* and immediately went out again.

[1.] It is certain that this was a good question, and could not be put to one that was better able to answer it. Truth is that pearl of great price which the human understanding has a desire for and is in quest of; for it cannot rest but in that which is, or at least is apprehended to be, truth. When we search the scriptures, and attend the ministry of the word, it must be with this enquiry, *What is truth?* and with this prayer, *Lead me in thy truth, into all truth*. But many put this question that have not patience and constancy enough to persevere in their search after truth, or not humility and sincerity enough to receive it when they have found it, 2 Tim. iii. 7. Thus many deal with their own consciences; they ask them those needful questions, "What am I?" "What have I done?" but will not take time for an answer

[2.] It is uncertain with what design

Pilate asked this question. *First*, Perhaps he spoke it as a learner, as one that began to think well of Christ, and to look upon him with some respect, and desired to be informed what new notions he advanced and what improvements he pretended to in religion and learning. But while he desired to hear some new truth from him, as Herod to see some miracle, the clamour and outrage of the priests' mob at his gate obliged him abruptly to let fall the discourse. *Secondly*, Some think he spoke it as a judge, enquiring further into the cause now brought before him: "Let me into this mystery, and tell me what the truth of it is, the true state of this matter." *Thirdly*, Others think he spoke it as a scoffer, in a jeering way: "Thou talkest of truth; canst thou tell what truth is, or give me a definition of it?" Thus he makes a jest of the everlasting gospel, that great truth which the chief priests hated and persecuted, and which Christ was now witnessing to and suffering for; and like men of no religion, who take a pleasure in bantering all religions, he ridicules both sides; and therefore Christ made him no reply. *Answer not a fool according to his folly; cast not pearls before swine*. But, though Christ would not tell Pilate what is truth, he has told his disciples, and by them has told us, *ch. xiv. 6*.

III. The result of both these conferences with the prosecutors and the prisoner (*v. 38—40*), in two things:—

1. The judge appeared his friend, and favourable to him, for,

(1.) He publicly declared him innocent, *v. 38*. Upon the whole matter, *I find in him no fault at all*. He supposes there might be some controversy in religion between him and them, wherein he was as likely to be in the right as they; but nothing criminal appears against him. This solemn declaration of Christ's innocency was, [1.] For the justification and honour of the Lord Jesus. By this it appears that though he was treated as the worst of malefactors he had never merited such treatment. [2.] For explaining the design and intention of his death, that he did not die for any sin of his own, even in the judgment of the judge himself, and therefore he died as a sacrifice for our sins, and that, even in the judgment of the prosecutors themselves, *one man should die for the people*, *ch. xi. 50*. This is he that *did no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth* (*Isa. liii. 9*), who was to be cut off, but not for himself, *Dan. ix. 26*. [3.] For aggravating the sin of the Jews that prosecuted him with so much violence. If a prisoner has had a fair trial, and has been acquitted by those that are proper judges of the crime, especially if there be no cause to suspect them partial in his favour, he must be believed innocent, and his accusers are bound to acquiesce. But our Lord Jesus, though brought in not guilty, is still run down as a malefactor, and his blood thirsted for.

(2.) He proposed an expedient for his discharge (*v. 39*): *You have a custom, that I should release to you a prisoner at the pass-over; shall it be this king of the Jews?* He proposed this, not to the chief priests (he knew they would never agree to it), but to the multitude; it was an appeal to the people, as appears, *Matt. xxvii. 15*. Probably he had heard how this Jesus had been attended but the other day with the hosannas of the common people; he therefore looked upon him to be the darling of the multitude, and the envy only of the rulers, and therefore he made no doubt but they would demand the release of Jesus, and this would stop the mouth of the prosecutors, and all would be well. [1.] He allows their custom, for which, perhaps, they had had a long prescription, in honour of the passover, which was a memorial of their release. But it was adding to God's words, as if he had not instituted enough for the due commemoration of that deliverance, and, though an act of mercy, might be injustice to the public, *Prov. xvii. 15*. [2.] He offers to release Jesus to them, according to the custom. If Pilate had had the honesty and courage that became a judge, he would not have named an innocent person to be competitor with a notorious criminal for this favour; if he found no fault in him, he was bound in conscience to discharge him. But he was willing to trim the matter, and please all sides, being governed more by worldly wisdom than by the rules of equity.

2. The people appeared his enemies, and implacable against him (*v. 40*): *They cried all again and again, Not this man, let not him be released, but Barabbas*. Observe, (1.) How fierce and outrageous they were. Pilate proposed the thing to them calmly, as worthy their mature consideration, but they resolved it in a heat, and gave in their resolution with clamour and noise, and in the utmost confusion. Note, The enemies of Christ's holy religion cry it down, and so hope to run it down; witness the outcry at Ephesus, *Acts xix. 34*. But those who think the worse of things or persons merely for their being thus exclaimed against have a very small share of constancy and consideration. Nay, there is cause to suspect a deficiency of reason and justice on that side which calls in the assistance of popular tumult. (2.) How foolish and absurd they were, as is intimated in the short account here given of the other candidate: *Now Barabbas was a robber, and therefore*, [1.] A breaker of the law of God; and yet he shall be spared, rather than one who reproved the pride, avarice, and tyranny of the priests and elders. Though Barabbas be a robber, he will not rob them of Moses's seat, nor of their traditions, and then no matter. [2.] He was an enemy to the public safety and personal property. The clamour of the town is wont to be against robbers (*Job xxx. 5*, *Men cried after them as after a*



thief), yet here it is for one. Thus those do who prefer their sins before Christ. Sin is a robber, every base lust is a robber, and yet foolishly chosen rather than Christ, who would truly enrich us.

## CHAP. XIX.

Though in the history hitherto this evangelist seems industriously to have declined the recording of such passages as had been related by the other evangelists, yet, when he comes to the sufferings and death of Christ, instead of passing them over, as one ashamed of his Master's chain and cross, and looking upon them as the blemishes of his story, he repeats what had been before related, with considerable enlargements, as one that desired to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, to glory in nothing save in the cross of Christ. In the story of this chapter we have, I. The remainder of Christ's trial before Pilate, which was tumultuous and confused, ver. 1-15. II. Sentence given, and execution done upon it, ver. 16-18. III. The title over his head, ver. 19-22. IV. The parting of his garment, ver. 23, 24. V. The care he took of his mother, ver. 25-27. VI. The giving him vinegar to drink, ver. 28, 29. VII. His dying word, ver. 30. VIII. The piercing of his side, ver. 31-37. IX. The burial of his body, ver. 38-42. O that in meditating on these things we may experimentally know the power of Christ's death, and the fellowship of his sufferings!

**T**HEN Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him*. 2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put *it* on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, 3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. 4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. 5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man! 6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify *him*: for I find no fault in him. 7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. 8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; 9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? 11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. 12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: who-

soever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar. 13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! 15 But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.

Here is a further account of the unfair trial which they gave to our Lord Jesus. The prosecutors carrying it on with great confusion among the people, and the judge with great confusion in his own breast, between both the narrative is such as is not easily reduced to method; we must therefore take the parts of it as they lie.

I. The judge abuses the prisoner, though he declares him innocent, and hopes thereby to pacify the prosecutors; wherein his intention, if indeed it was good, will by no means justify his proceedings, which were palpably unjust.

1. He ordered him to be whipped as a criminal, *v. 1*. *Pilate*, seeing the people so outrageous, and being disappointed in his project of releasing him upon the people's choice, *took Jesus, and scourged him*, that is, appointed the lictors that attended him to do it. Bede is of opinion that Pilate scourged Jesus himself with his own hands, because it is said, *He took him and scourged him*, that it might be done favourably. Matthew and Mark mention his scourging after his condemnation, but here it appears to have been before. Luke speaks of Pilate's offering to *chastise him, and let him go*, which must be before sentence. This scourging of him was designed only to pacify the Jews, and in it Pilate put a compliment upon them, that he would take their word against his own sentiments so far. The Roman scourgings were ordinarily very severe, not limited, as among the Jews, to *forty stripes*; yet this pain and shame Christ submitted to for our sakes.

(1.) *That the scripture might be fulfilled*, which spoke of his being *stricken, smitten, and afflicted*, and the *chastisement of our peace being upon him* (Isa. liii. 5), of his giving his back to the smiters (Isa. l. 6), of the ploughers ploughing upon his back, Ps. cxxix. 3. He himself likewise had foretold it, Matt. xx. 19; Mark x. 34; Luke xviii. 33. (2.) *That by his stripes we might be healed*, 1 Pet. ii. 4. We deserved to have been chastised *with whips and scorpions, and beaten with many stripes*, having known our Lord's will and not done it; but Christ un-



derwent the stripes for us, bearing the rod of his Father's wrath, Lam. iii. 1. Pilate's design in scourging him was that he might not be condemned, which did not take effect, but intimated what was God's design, that his being scourged might prevent our being condemned, we having fellowship in his sufferings, and this did take effect: the physician scourged, and so the patient healed. (3.) That stripes, for his sake, might be sanctified and made easy to his followers; and they might, as they did, rejoice in that shame (Acts v. 41; xvi. 22, 25), as Paul did, who was in stripes *above measure*, 2 Cor. xi. 23. Christ's stripes take out the sting of theirs, and alter the property of them. *We are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world*, 1 Cor. xi. 32.

2. He turned him over to his soldiers, to be ridiculed and made sport with as a fool (v. 2, 3): *The soldiers, who were the governor's life-guard, put a crown of thorns upon his head*; such a crown they thought fittest for such a king; *they put on him a purple robe*, some old threadbare coat of that colour, which they thought good enough to be the badge of his royalty; and they complimented him with, *Hail, king of the Jews* (like people like king), and then *smote him with their hands*.

(1.) See here the baseness and injustice of Pilate, that he would suffer one whom he believed an innocent person, and if so an excellent person, to be thus abused and trampled on by his own servants. Those who are under the arrest of the law ought to be under the protection of it; and their being secured is to be their security. But Pilate did this, [1.] To oblige his soldiers' merry humour, and perhaps his own too, notwithstanding the gravity one might have expected in a judge. *Herod*, as well as *his men of war*, had just before done the same, Luke xxiii. 11. It was as good as a stage-play to them, now that it was a festival time; as the Philistines made sport with Samson. [2.] To oblige the Jews' malicious humour, and to gratify them, who desired that all possible disgrace might be done to Christ, and the utmost indignities put upon him.

(2.) See here the rudeness and insolence of the soldiers, how perfectly lost they were to all justice and humanity, who could thus triumph over a man in misery, and one that had been in reputation for wisdom and honour, and never did any thing to forfeit it. But thus hath Christ's holy religion been basely misrepresented, dressed up by bad men at their pleasure, and so exposed to contempt and ridicule, as Christ was here. [1.] They clothe him with a mock-robe, as if it were a sham and a jest, and nothing but the product of a heated fancy and a crazed imagination. And as Christ is here represented as a king in conceit only, so is his religion as a concern in conceit only, and God and the soul, sin and duty, heaven and hell, are with many all chimeras. [2.] They

crown him with thorns; as if the religion of Christ were a perfect penance, and the greatest pain and hardship in the world; as if to submit to the control of God and conscience were to thrust one's head into a thicket of thorns; but this is an unjust imputation; *thorns and snares are in the way of the froward*, but roses and laurels in religion's ways.

(3.) See here the wonderful condescension of our Lord Jesus in his sufferings for us. Great and generous minds can bear any thing better than ignominy, any toil, any pain, any loss, rather than reproach; yet this the great and holy Jesus submitted to for us. See and admire, [1.] The invincible patience of a sufferer, leaving us an example of contentment and courage, evenness, and easiness of spirit, under the greatest hardships we may meet with in the way of duty. [2.] The invincible love and kindness of a Saviour, who not only cheerfully and resolutely went through all this, but voluntarily undertook it for us and for our salvation. Herein he commended his love, that he would not only die for us, but die as a fool dies. *First*, He *endured the pain*; not the pangs of death only, though in the death of the cross these were most exquisite; but, as if these were too little, he submitted to those previous pains. Shall we complain of a thorn in the flesh, and of being buffeted by affliction, because we need it to hide pride from us, when Christ humbled himself to bear those thorns in the head, and those buffetings, to save and teach us? 2 Cor. xii. 7. *Secondly*, He *despised the shame*, the shame of a fool's coat, and the mock-respect paid him, with, *Hail, king of the Jews*. If we be at any time ridiculed for well-doing, let us not be ashamed, but glorify God, for thus we are partakers of Christ's sufferings. He that bore these sham honours was recompensed with real honours, and so shall we, if we patiently suffer shame for him.

II. Pilate, having thus abused the prisoner, presents him to the prosecutors, in hope that they would now be satisfied, and drop the prosecution, v. 4, 5. Here he proposes two things to their consideration:—

1. That he had not found any thing in him which made him obnoxious to the Roman government (v. 4): *I find no fault in him*; οὐδενίαν αἰτίαν εὑρίσκω—I do not find in him the least fault, or cause of accusation. Upon further enquiry, he repeats the declaration he had made, ch. xviii. 38. Hereby he condemns himself; if he found no fault in him, why did he scourge him, why did he suffer him to be abused? None ought to suffer ill but those that do ill; yet thus many banter and abuse religion, who yet, if they be serious, cannot but own they find no fault in it. If he found no fault in him, why did he bring him out to his prosecutors, and not immediately release him, as he ought to have done? If Pilate had consulted his own conscience only, he would neither have



scourged Christ nor crucified him; but, thinking to trim the matter, to please the people by scourging Christ, and save his conscience by not crucifying him, behold he does both; whereas, if he had at first resolved to crucify him, he need not have scourged him. It is common for those who think to keep themselves from greater sins by venturing upon less sins to run into both.

2. That he had done that to him which would make him the less dangerous to them and to their government, *v. 5*. He brought him out to them, wearing the crown of thorns, his head and face all bloody, and said, "*Behold the man whom you are so jealous of,*" intimating that though his having been so popular might have given them some cause to fear that his interest in the country would lessen theirs, yet he had taken an effectual course to prevent it, by treating him as a slave, and exposing him to contempt, after which he supposed the people would never look upon him with any respect, nor could he ever retrieve his reputation again. Little did Pilate think with what veneration even these sufferings of Christ would in after ages be commemorated by the best and greatest of men, who would glory in that cross and those stripes which he thought would have been to him and his followers a perpetual and indelible reproach. (1.) Observe here our Lord Jesus shows himself dressed up in all the marks of ignominy. He came forth, willing to be made a spectacle, and to be hooted at, as no doubt he was when he came forth in this garb, knowing that he was set for a *sign that should be spoken against*, *Luke ii. 34*. Did he go forth thus bearing our reproach? Let us go forth to him *bearing his reproach*, *Heb. xiii. 13*. (2.) How Pilate shows him: *Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man. He saith unto them:* so the original is; and, the immediate antecedent being *Jesus*, I see no inconvenience in supposing these to be Christ's own words; he said, "*Behold the man against whom you are so exasperated.*" But some of the Greek copies, and the generality of the translators, supply it as we do, *Pilate saith unto them, with a design to appease them, Behold the man*; not so much to move their pity, Behold a man worthy your compassion, as to silence their jealousies, Behold a man not worthy your suspicion, a man from whom you can henceforth fear no danger; his crown is *profaned, and cast to the ground*, and now all mankind will make a jest of him. The word however is very affecting: *Behold the man*. It is good for every one of us, with an eye of faith, to behold the man Christ Jesus in his sufferings. *Behold this king with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him, the crown of thorns*, *Cant. iii. 11*. "Behold him, and be suitably affected with the sight. Behold him, and mourn because of him. Behold him, and love him; be still *looking unto Jesus.*"

III. The prosecutors, instead of being pacified, were but the more exasperated, *v. 6, 7*.

1. Observe here their clamour and outrage. *The chief priests*, who headed the mob, *cried out* with fury and indignation, and their officers, or servants, who must say as they said, joined with them in crying, *Crucify him, crucify him*. The common people perhaps would have acquiesced in Pilate's declaration of his innocence, but their leaders, the priests, *caused them to err*. Now by this it appears that their malice against Christ was, (1.) Unreasonable and most absurd, in that they offer not to make good their charge against him, nor to object against the judgment of Pilate concerning him; but, though he be innocent, he must be crucified. (2.) It was insatiable and very cruel. Neither the extremity of his scourging, nor his patience under it, nor the tender expostulations of the judge, could mollify them in the least; no, nor could the jest into which Pilate had turned the cause, put them into a pleasant humour. (3.) It was violent and exceedingly resolute; they will have it their own way, and hazard the governor's favour, the peace of the city, and their own safety, rather than abate of the utmost of their demands. Were they so violent in running down our Lord Jesus, and in crying, *Crucify him, crucify him?* and shall not we be vigorous and zealous in advancing his name, and in crying, *Crown him, Crown him?* Did their hatred of him sharpen their endeavours against him? and shall not our love to him quicken our endeavours for him and his kingdom?

2. The check Pilate gave to their fury, still insisting upon the prisoner's innocence: "*Take you him and crucify him, if he must be crucified.*" This is spoken ironically; he knew they could not, they durst not, crucify him; but it is as if he should say, "You shall not make me a drudge to your malice; I cannot with a safe conscience crucify him." A good resolve, if he would but have stuck to it. He found no fault in him, and therefore should not have continued to parley with the prosecutors. Those that would be safe from sin should be deaf to temptation. Nay, he should have secured the prisoner from their insults. What was he armed with power for, but to protect the injured? The guards of governors ought to be the guards of justice. But Pilate had not courage enough to act according to his conscience; and his cowardice betrayed him into a snare.

3. The further colour which the prosecutors gave to their demand (*v. 7*): *We have a law, and by our law, if it were but in our power to execute it, he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God*. Now here observe, (1.) They made their boast of the law, even when through breaking the law they dishonoured God, as is charged upon the Jews, *Rom. ii. 23*. They had indeed an excellent law, far exceeding the statutes and

judgments of other nations; but in vain did they boast of their law, when they abused it to such bad purposes. (2.) They discover a restless and inveterate malice against our Lord Jesus. When they could not incense Pilate against him by alleging that he pretended himself a king, they urged this, that he pretended himself a God. Thus they turn every stone to take him off. (3.) They pervert the law, and make that the instrument of their malice. Some think they refer to a law made particularly against Christ, as if, being a law, it must be executed, right or wrong; whereas there is a woe to them that *decree unrighteous decrees*, and that *write the grievousness which they have prescribed*, Isa. x. 1. See Mic. vi. 16. But it should seem they rather refer to the law of Moses; and if so, [1.] It was true that blasphemers, idolaters, and false prophets, were to be put to death by that law. Whoever falsely pretended to be the Son of God was guilty of blasphemy, Lev. xxiv. 16. But then, [2.] It was false that Christ pretended to be the Son of God, for he really was so; and they ought to have enquired into the proofs he produced of his being so. If he said that he was the Son of God, and the scope and tendency of his doctrine were not to draw people from God, but to bring them to him, and if he confirmed his mission and doctrine by miracles, as undoubtedly he did, beyond contradiction, by their law they ought to *hearken to him* (Deut. xviii. 18, 19), and, if they did not, they were to be *cut off*. That which was his honour, and might have been their happiness, if they had not stood in their own light, they impute to him as a crime, for which he ought to die; yet if he ought to die by their law he ought not to be crucified, for this was no death inflicted by their law.

IV. The judge brings the prisoner again to his trial, upon this new suggestion. Observe,

1. The concern Pilate was in, when he heard this alleged (v. 8): When he heard that his prisoner pretended not to royalty only, but to deity, he was *the more afraid*. This embarrassed him more than ever, and made the case more difficult both ways; for, (1.) There was the more danger of offending the people if he should acquit him, for he knew how jealous that people were for the unity of the Godhead, and what aversion they now had to other gods; and therefore, though he might hope to pacify their rage against a pretended king, he could never reconcile them to a pretended God. "If this be at the bottom of the tumult," thinks Pilate, "it will not be turned off with a jest." (2.) There was the more danger of offending his own conscience if he should condemn him. "Is he one" (thinks Pilate) "that makes himself *the Son of God*? and what if it should prove that he is so? What will become of me then?" Even natural conscience makes men afraid of being found

*fighting against God*. The heathen had some fabulous traditions of incarnate deities appearing sometimes in mean circumstances, and treated ill by some that paid dearly for their so doing. Pilate fears lest he should thus run himself into a preminure.

2. His further examination of our Lord Jesus thereupon, v. 9. That he might give the prosecutors all the fair play they could desire, he resumed the debate, went into the judgment-hall, and asked Christ, *Whence art thou?* Observe,

(1.) The place he chose for this examination: He *went into the judgment-hall* for privacy, that he might be out of the noise and clamour of the crowd, and might examine the thing the more closely. Those that would find out the truth as it is in Jesus must get out of the noise of prejudice, and retire as it were into the judgment-hall, to converse with Christ alone.

(2.) The question he put to him: *Whence art thou?* Art thou from men or from heaven? From beneath or from above? He had before asked directly, *Art thou a King?* But here he does not directly ask, *Art thou the Son of God?* lest he should seem to meddle with divine things too boldly. But in general, "*Whence art thou?* Where wast thou, and in what world hadst thou a being, before thy coming into this world?"

(3.) The silence of our Lord Jesus when he was examined upon this head; but *Jesus gave him no answer*. This was not a sullen silence, in contempt of the court, nor was it because he knew not what to say; but, [1.] It was a patient silence, that the scripture might be fulfilled, *as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth*, Isa. liii. 7. This silence loudly bespoke his submission to his Father's will in his present sufferings, which he thus accommodated himself to, and composed himself to bear. He was silent, because he would say nothing to hinder his sufferings. If Christ had avowed himself a God as plainly as he avowed himself a king, it is probable that Pilate would not have condemned him (for he was afraid at the mention of it by the prosecutors); and the Romans, though they triumphed over the *kings of the nations* they conquered, yet stood in awe of their gods. See 1 Cor. ii. 8. *If they had known him to be the Lord of glory, they would not have crucified him*; and how then could we have been saved? [2.] It was a prudent silence. When the chief priests asked him, *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* he answered, *I am*, for he knew they went upon the scriptures of the Old Testament which spoke of the Messiah; but when Pilate asked him he knew he did not understand his own question, having no notion of the Messiah, and of his being the *Son of God*, and therefore to what purpose should he reply to him whose head was filled with the pagan theology, to which he would have turned his answer?



(4.) The haughty cheek which Pilate gave him for his silence (v. 10): "*Speakest thou not unto me?*" Dost thou put such an affront upon me as to stand mute? What knowest thou not that, as president of the province, I have power, if I think fit, to crucify thee, and have power, if I think fit, to release thee?" Observe here, [1.] How Pilate magnifies himself, and boasts of his own authority, as not inferior to that of Nebuchadnezzar, of whom it is said that *whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive*, Dan. v. 19. Men in power are apt to be puffed up with their power, and the more absolute and arbitrary it is the more it gratifies and humours their pride. But he magnifies his power to an exorbitant degree when he boasts that he has power to crucify one whom he had declared innocent, for no prince or potentate has authority to do wrong. *Id possumus, quod jure possumus*—We can do that only which we can do justly. [2.] How he tramples upon our blessed Saviour: *Speakest thou not unto me?* He reflects upon him, *First*, As if he were undutiful and disrespectful to those in authority, not speaking when he was spoken to. *Secondly*, As if he were ungrateful to one that had been tender of him: "*Speakest thou not to me who have laboured to secure thy release?*" *Thirdly*, As if he were unwise for himself: "*Wilt thou not speak to clear thyself to one that is willing to clear thee?*" If Christ had indeed sought to save his life, now had been his time to have spoken; but that which he had to do was to lay down his life.

(5.) Christ's pertinent answer to this check, v. 11, where,

[1.] He boldly rebukes his arrogance, and rectifies his mistake: "*Big as thou lookest and talkest, thou couldest have no power at all against me, no power to scourge, no power to crucify, except it were given thee from above.*" Though Christ did not think fit to answer him when he was impertinent (then *answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like him*), yet he did think fit to answer him when he was imperious; then *answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit*, Prov. xxvi. 4, 5. When Pilate used his power, Christ silently submitted to it; but, when he grew proud of it, he made him know himself: "*All the power thou hast is given thee from above,*" which may be taken two ways:—*First*, As reminding him that his power in general, as a magistrate, was a limited power, and he could do no more than God would suffer him to do. God is the fountain of power; and the powers that are, as they are ordained by him and derived from him, so they are subject to him. They ought to go no further than his law directs them; they can go no further than his providence permits them. They are God's hand and his sword, Ps. xvii. 13, 14. Though the axe may boast itself against him that heweth therewith, yet still it

is but a tool, Isa. x. 5, 15. Let the proud oppressors know that there is a higher than they, to whom they are accountable, Eccl. v. 8. And let this silence the murmurings of the oppressed, *It is the Lord*. God has bidden Shimei curse David; and let it comfort them that their persecutors can do no more than God will let them. See Isa. li. 12, 13. *Secondly*, As informing him that his power against him in particular, and all the efforts of that power, were by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Acts ii. 23. Pilate never fancied himself to look so great as now, when he sat in judgment upon such a prisoner as this, who was looked upon by many as the *Son of God* and king of Israel, and had the fate of so great a man at his disposal; but Christ lets him know that he was herein but an instrument in God's hand, and could do nothing against him, but by the appointment of Heaven, Acts iv. 27, 28.

[2.] He mildly excuses and extenuates his sin, in comparison with the sin of the ring-leaders: "*Therefore he that delivered me unto thee lies under greater guilt; for thou as a magistrate hast power from above, and art in thy place, thy sin is less than theirs who, from envy and malice, urge thee to abuse thy power.*"

*First*, It is plainly intimated that what Pilate did was sin, a great sin, and that the force which the Jews put upon him, and which he put upon himself in it, would not justify him. Christ hereby intended a hint for the awakening of his conscience and the increase of the fear he was now under. The guilt of others will not acquit us, nor will it avail in the great day to say that others were worse than we, for we are not to be judged by comparison, but must bear our own burden.

*Secondly*, Yet theirs that delivered him to Pilate was the greater sin. By this it appears that all sins are not equal, but some more heinous than others; some comparatively as gnats, others as camels; some as motes in the eyes, others as beams; some as pence, others as pounds. *He that delivered Christ to Pilate* was either, 1. The people of the Jews, who cried out, *Crucify him, crucify him*. They had seen Christ's miracles, which Pilate had not; to them the Messiah was first sent; they were his own; and to them, who were now enslaved, a Redeemer should have been most welcome, and therefore it was much worse in them to appear against him than in Pilate. 2. Or rather he means Caiaphas in particular, who was at the head of the conspiracy against Christ, and first advised his death, ch. xi. 49, 50. The sin of Caiaphas was abundantly greater than the sin of Pilate. Caiaphas prosecuted Christ from pure enmity to him and his doctrine, deliberately and of malice prepense. Pilate condemned him purely for fear of the people, and it was a hasty resolution which he had not time to cool upon. 3. Some think Christ means Judas; for, though he did not imme-

diately deliver him into the hands of Pilate, yet he betrayed him to those that did. The sin of Judas was, upon many accounts, greater than the sin of Pilate. Pilate was a stranger to Christ; Judas was his friend and follower. Pilate found no fault in him, but Judas knew a great deal of good of him. Pilate, though biassed, was not bribed, but Judas took a reward against the innocent; the sin of Judas was a leading sin, and let in all that followed. He was a guide to them that took Jesus. So great was the sin of Judas that vengeance suffered him not to live; but when Christ said this, or soon after, he was gone to his own place.

V. Pilate struggles with the Jews to deliver Jesus out of their hands, but in vain. We hear no more after this of any thing that passed between Pilate and the prisoner; what remains lay between him and the prosecutors.

1. Pilate seems more zealous than before to get Jesus discharged (v. 12): *Thenceforth*, from this time, and for this reason, because Christ had given him that answer (v. 11), which, though it had a rebuke in it, yet he took kindly; and, though Christ found fault with him, he still continued to find no fault in Christ, but sought to release him, desired it, endeavoured it. He sought to release him; he contrived how to do it handsomely and safely, and so as not to disoblige the priests. It never does well when our resolutions to do our duty are swallowed up in projects how to do it plausibly and conveniently. If Pilate's policy had not prevailed above his justice, he would not have been long seeking to release him, but would have done it. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum—Let justice be done, though heaven itself should fall.*

2. The Jews were more furious than ever, and more violent to get Jesus crucified. Still they carry on their design with noise and clamour as before; so now they cried out. They would have it thought that the commonalty was against him, and therefore laboured to get him cried down by a multitude, and it is no hard matter to pack a mob; whereas, if a fair poll had been granted, I doubt not but it would have been carried by a great majority for the releasing of him. A few madmen may out-shout many wise men, and then fancy themselves to speak the sense (when it is but the nonsense) of a nation, or of all mankind; but it is not so easy a thing to change the sense of the people as it is to misrepresent it, and to change their cry. Now that Christ was in the hands of his enemies his friends were shy and silent, and disappeared, and those that were against him were forward to show themselves so; and this gave the chief priests an opportunity to represent it as the concurring vote of all the Jews that he should be crucified. In this outcry they sought two things:—(1.) To blacken the prisoner as an enemy to Cæsar. He had refused the kingdoms of this world and the glory of

them, had declared his kingdom not to be of this world, and yet they will have it that he speaks against Cæsar; ἀντιτίθει—he opposes Cæsar, invades his dignity and sovereignty. It has always been the artifice of the enemies of religion to represent it as hurtful to kings and provinces, when it would be highly beneficial to both. (2.) To frighten the judge, as no friend to Cæsar: “If thou let this man go unpunished, and let him go on, thou art not Cæsar's friend, and therefore false to thy trust and the duty of thy place, obnoxious to the emperor's displeasure, and liable to be turned out.” They intimate a threatening that they would inform against him, and get him displaced; and here they touched him in a sensible and very tender part. - But, of all people, these Jews should not have pretended a concern for Cæsar, who were themselves so ill affected to him and his government. They should not talk of being friends to Cæsar, who were themselves such back friends to him; yet thus a pretended zeal for that which is good often serves to cover a real malice against that which is better.

3. When other expedients had been tried in vain, Pilate slightly endeavoured to banter them out of their fury, and yet, in doing this, betrayed himself to them, and yielded to the rapid stream, v. 13—15. After he had stood it out a great while, and seemed now as if he would have made a vigorous resistance upon this attack (v. 12), he basely surrendered. Observe here,

(1.) What it was that shocked Pilate (v. 13): “When he heard that saying, that he could not be true to Cæsar's honour, nor sure of Cæsar's favour, if he did not put Jesus to death, then he thought it was time to look about him. All they had said to prove Christ a malefactor, and that therefore it was Pilate's duty to condemn him, did not move him, but he still kept to his conviction of Christ's innocency; but, when they urged that it was his interest to condemn him, then he began to yield. Note, Those that bind up their happiness in the favour of men make themselves an easy prey to the temptations of Satan.

(2.) What preparation was made for a definitive sentence upon this matter: *Pilate brought Jesus forth*, and he himself in great state took the chair. We may suppose that he called for his robes, that he might look big, and then sat down in the judgment-seat.

[1.] Christ was condemned with all the ceremony that could be. *First*, To bring us off at God's bar, and that all believers through Christ, being judged here, might be acquitted in the court of heaven. *Secondly*, To take off the terror of pompous trials, which his followers would be brought to for his sake. Paul might the better stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat when his Master had stood there before him.

[2.] Notice is here taken of the place and time.



*First*, The place where Christ was condemned: in a place called the *Pavement*, but in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*, probably the place where he used to sit to try causes or criminals. Some make *Gabbatha* to signify an enclosed place, fenced against the insults of the people, whom therefore he did the less need to fear; others an *elevated place*, raised that all might see him.

*Secondly*, The time, v. 14. It was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour. Observe, 1. The day: It was the preparation of the passover, that is, for the passover-sabbath, and the solemnities of that and the rest of the days of the feast of unleavened bread. This is plain from Luke xxiii. 54, *It was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on*. So that this preparation was for the sabbath. Note, Before the passover there ought to be preparation. This is mentioned as an aggravation of their sin, in persecuting Christ with so much malice and fury, that it was when they should have been purging out the old leaven, to get ready for the passover; but the better the day the worse the deed. 2. The hour: *It was about the sixth hour*. Some ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts read it about the third hour, which agrees with Mark xv. 25. And it appears by Matt. xxvii. 45 that he was upon the cross before the sixth hour. But it should seem to come in here, not as a precise determination of the time, but as an additional aggravation of the sin of his prosecutors, that they were pushing on the prosecution, not only on a solemn day, the day of the preparation, but, from the third to the sixth hour (which was, as we call it, church-time) on that day, they were employed in this wickedness; so that for this day, though they were priests, they dropped the temple-service, for they did not leave Christ till the sixth hour, when the darkness began, which frightened them away. Some think that the sixth hour, with this evangelist, is, according to the Roman reckoning and ours, six of the clock in the morning, answering to the Jews' first hour of the day; this is very probable, that Christ's trial before Pilate was at the height about six in the morning, which was then a little after sun-rising.

(3.) The rencounter Pilate had with the Jews, both priests and people, before he proceeded to give judgment, endeavouring in vain to stem the tide of their rage.

[1.] He saith unto the Jews, *Behold your king*. This is a reproof to them for the absurdity and malice of their insinuating that this Jesus made himself a king: "*Behold your king*, that is, him whom you accuse as a pretender to the crown. Is this a man likely to be dangerous to the government? I am satisfied he is not, and you may be so too, and let him alone." Some think he hereby upbraids them with their secret disaffection to Cæsar: "You would have this man to be your king, if he would but have headed a re-

bellion against Cæsar." But Pilate, though he was far from meaning so, seems as if he were the voice of God to them. Christ, now crowned with thorns, is, as a king at his coronation, offered to the people: "*Behold your king*, the king whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion;" but they, instead of entering into it with acclamations of joyful consent, protest against him; they will not have a king of God's choosing.

[2.] They cried out with the greatest indignation, *Away with him, away with him*, which speaks disdain as well as malice, ἀπορ, ἀπορ—"Take him, he is none of ours; we disown him for our kinsman, much more for our king; we have not only no veneration for him, but no compassion; *away with him* out of our sight;" for so it was written of him, he is one whom the nation abhors (Isa. xlix. 7), and they hid as it were their faces from him, Isa. liii. 2, 3. *Away with him from the earth*, Acts xxii. 22. This shows, *First*, How we deserved to have been treated at God's tribunal. We were by sin become odious to God's holiness, which cried, *Away with them, away with them*, for God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. We were also become obnoxious to God's justice, which cried against us, "*Crucify them, crucify them*, let the sentence of the law be executed." Had not Christ interposed, and been thus rejected of men, we had been for ever rejected of God. *Secondly*, It shows how we ought to treat our sins. We are often in scripture said to crucify sin, in conformity to Christ's death. Now they that crucified Christ did it with detestation. With a pious indignation we should run down sin in us, as they with an impious indignation ran him down who was made sin for us. The true penitent casts away from him his transgressions, *Away with them, away with them* (Isa. ii. 20); xxx. 22, *crucify them, crucify them*; it is not fit that they should live in my soul, Hos. xiv. 8.

[3.] Pilate, willing to have Jesus released, and yet that it should be their doing, asks them, *Shall I crucify your king?* In saying this, he designed either, *First*, To stop their mouths, by showing them how absurd it was for them to reject one who offered himself to them to be their king at a time when they needed one more than ever. Have they no sense of slavery? No desire of liberty? No value for a deliverer? Though he saw no cause to fear him, they might see cause to hope for something from him; since crushed and sinking interests are ready to catch at any thing. Or, *Secondly*, To stop the mouth of his own conscience. "If this Jesus be a king" (thinks Pilate), "he is only king of the Jews, and therefore I have nothing to do but to make a fair tender of him to them; if they refuse him, and will have their king crucified, what is that to me?" He banters them for their folly in expecting a Messiah, and yet running down one that bade so fair to be he.

[4.] The chief priests, that they might effectually renounce Christ, and engage Pilate to crucify him, but otherwise sorely against their will, cried out, *We have no king but Cæsar.* This they knew would please Pilate, and so they hoped to carry their point, though at the same time they hated Cæsar and his government. But observe here, *First*, What a plain indication this is that the time for the Messiah to appear, even the set time, was now come; for, if the Jews have no king but Cæsar, then is the *sceptre departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet*, which should never be till Shiloh come to set up a spiritual kingdom. And, *Secondly*, What a righteous thing it was with God to bring upon them that ruin by the Romans which followed not long after. 1. They adhere to Cæsar, and to Cæsar they shall go. God soon gave them enough of their Cæsars, and, according to Jotham's parable, since the trees choose the bramble for their king, rather than the vine and the olive, an evil spirit is sent among them, for they could not do it truly and sincerely, Judg. ix. 12, 19. Hence-

ward they were rebels to the Cæsars, and the Cæsars tyrants to them, and their disaffection ended in the overthrow of their place and nation. It is just with God to make that a scourge and plague to us which we prefer before Christ. 2. They would have no other king than Cæsar, and never have they had any other to this day, but have now *abode many days without a king, and without a prince* (Hos. iii. 4), without any of their own, but the kings of the nations have ruled over them; since they will have no king but Cæsar, so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it.

16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. 17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called *the place* of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: 18 Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

We have here sentence of death passed upon our Lord Jesus, and execution done soon after. A mighty struggle Pilate had had within him between his convictions and his corruptions; but at length his convictions yielded, and his corruptions prevailed, the fear of man having a greater power over him than the fear of God.

I. *Pilate gave judgment* against Christ, and signed the warrant for his execution, v. 16. We may see here, 1. How Pilate sinned against his conscience; he had again and again pronounced him innocent, and yet at last condemned him as guilty. Pilate, since he came to be governor, had in many in-

stances disoblged and exasperated the Jewish nation; for he was a man of a haughty and implacable spirit, and extremely wedded to his humour. He had seized upon the Corban, and spent it upon a water-work; he had brought into Jerusalem shields stamped with Cæsar's image, which was very provoking to the Jews; he had sacrificed the lives of many to his resolutions herein. Fearing therefore that he should be complained of for these and other insolences, he was willing to gratify the Jews. Now this makes the matter much worse. If he had been of an easy, soft, and pliable disposition, his yielding to so strong a stream had been the more excusable; but for a man that was so wilful in other things, and of so fierce a resolution, to be overcome in a thing of this nature, shows him to be a bad man indeed, that could better bear the wronging of his conscience than the crossing of his humour. 2. How he endeavoured to transfer the guilt upon the Jews. *He delivered him*, not to his own officers (as usual), but to the prosecutors, the chief priests and elders; so excusing the wrong to his own conscience with this, that it was but a permissive condemnation, and that he did not put Christ to death, but only connived at those that did it. 3. How Christ was *made sin for us*. We deserved to have been condemned, but Christ was condemned for us, that to us there might be *no condemnation*. God was now entering into judgment with his Son, that he might not enter into judgment with his servants.

II. Judgment was no sooner given than with all possible expedition the prosecutors, having gained their point, resolved to lose no time lest Pilate should change his mind, and order a reprieve (those are enemies to our souls, the worst of enemies, that hurry us to sin, and then leave us no room to undo what we have done amiss), and also lest there should be *an uproar among the people*, and they should find a greater number against them than they had with so much artifice got to be for them. It were well if we would be thus expeditious in that which is good, and not stay for more difficulties.

1. They immediately hurried away the prisoner. The chief priests greedily flew upon the prey which they had been long waiting for; now it is drawn into their net. Or *they*, that is, the soldiers who were to attend the execution, they took him and led him away, not to the place whence he came, and thence to the place of execution, as is usual with us, but directly to the place of execution. Both the priests and the soldiers joined in leading him away. Now was the *Son of man delivered into the hands of men*, wicked and unreasonable men. By the law of Moses (and in appeals by our law) the prosecutors were to be the executioners, Deut. xvii. 7. And the priests here were proud of the office. His being *led away* does not suppose him to have made any opposition, but *the scripture must be ful-*



filled, he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, Acts viii. 32. We deserved to have been led forth with the workers of iniquity as criminals to execution, Ps. cxxv. 5. But he was led forth for us, that we might escape.

2. To add to his misery, they obliged him, as long as he was able, to carry his cross (v. 17), according to the custom among the Romans; hence *Furcifer* was among them a name of reproach. Their crosses did not stand up constantly, as our gibbets do in the places of execution, because the malefactor was nailed to the cross as it lay along upon the ground, and then it was lifted up, and fastened in the earth, and removed when the execution was over, and commonly buried with the body; so that every one that was crucified had a cross of his own. Now Christ's carrying his cross may be considered, (1.) As a part of his sufferings; he endured the cross literally. It was a long and thick piece of timber that was necessary for such a use, and some think it was neither seasoned nor hewn. The blessed body of the Lord Jesus was tender, and unaccustomed to such burdens; it had now lately been harassed and tired out; his shoulders were sore with the stripes they had given him; every jog of the cross would renew his smart, and be apt to strike the thorns he was crowned with into his head; yet all this he patiently underwent, and it was but the *beginning of sorrows*. (2.) As answering the type which went before him; Isaac, when he was to be offered, carried the wood on which he was to be bound and with which he was to be burned. (3.) As very significant of his undertaking, the Father having laid upon him the iniquity of us all (Isa. liii. 6), and he having to take away sin by bearing it in his own body upon the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. He had said in effect, *On me be the curse*; for he was made a curse for us, and therefore on him was the cross. (4.) As very instructive to us. Our Master hereby taught all his disciples to take up their cross, and follow him. Whatever cross he calls us out to bear at any time, we must remember that he bore the cross first, and, by bearing it for us, bears it off from us in a great measure, for thus he hath made *his yoke easy, and his burden light*. He bore that end of the cross that had the curse upon it; this was the heavy end; and hence all that are his are enabled to call their afflictions for him *light, and but for a moment*.

3. They brought him to the place of execution: He went forth, not dragged against his will, but voluntary in his sufferings. He went forth out of the city, for he was crucified without the gate, Heb. xiii. 12. And, to put the greater infamy upon his sufferings, he was brought to the common place of execution, as one in all points numbered among the transgressors, a place called *Golgotha, the place of a skull*, where they threw dead men's skulls and bones, or where the heads of beheaded malefactors were left,—a place cere-

monially unclean; there Christ suffered, because he was made sin for us, that he might purge our consciences from dead works, and the pollution of them. If one would take notice of the traditions of the elders, there are two which are mentioned by many of the ancient writers concerning this place:—(1.) That Adam was buried here, and that this was the place of his skull, and they observe that where death triumphed over the first Adam there the second Adam triumphed over him. Gerhard quotes for this tradition Origen, Cyprian, Epiphanius, Austin, Jerome, and others. (2.) That this was that mountain in the land of Moriah on which Abraham offered up Isaac, and the ram was a ransom for Isaac.

4. There they crucified him, and the other malefactors with him (v. 18): *There they crucified him*. Observe, (1.) What death Christ died; the death of the cross, a bloody, painful, shameful death, a cursed death. He was nailed to the cross, as a sacrifice bound to the altar, as a Saviour fixed for his undertaking; his ear nailed to God's door-post, to serve him for ever. He was lifted up as the brazen serpent, hung between heaven and earth because we were unworthy of either, and abandoned by both. His hands were stretched out to invite and embrace us; he hung upon the tree some hours, dying gradually in the full use of reason and speech, that he might actually resign himself a sacrifice. (2.) In what company he died: *Two others with him*. Probably these would not have been executed at that time, but at the request of the chief priests, to add to the disgrace of our Lord Jesus, which might be the reason why one of them reviled him, because their death was hastened for his sake. Had they taken two of his disciples, and crucified them with him, it had been an honour to him; but, if such as they had been partakers with him in suffering, it would have looked as if they had been undertakers with him in satisfaction. Therefore it was ordered that his fellow-sufferers should be the worst of sinners, that he might bear our reproach, and that the merit might appear to be his only. This exposed him much to the people's contempt and hatred, who are apt to judge of persons by the lump, and are not curious in distinguishing, and would conclude him not only a malefactor because he was yoked with malefactors, but the worst of the three because put in the midst. But thus the scripture was fulfilled, *He was numbered among the transgressors*. He did not die at the altar among the sacrifices, nor mingle his blood with that of bulls and goats; but he died among the criminals, and mingled his blood with theirs who were sacrificed to public justice.

And now let us pause awhile, and with an eye of faith look upon Jesus. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? See him who was clothed with glory stripped of it all, and clothed with shame—him who was the praise of angels made a reproach of men—him who

had been with eternal delight and joy in the bosom of his Father now in the extremities of pain and agony. See him bleeding, see him struggling, see him dying, see him and love him, love him and live to him, and study what we shall render.

19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. 21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. 22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. 23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. 24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. 25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. 28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. 29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Here are some remarkable circumstances

of Christ's dying more fully related than before, which those will take special notice of who covet to know Christ and him crucified.

I. The title set up over his head. Observe,

1. The inscription itself which Pilate wrote, and ordered to be fixed to the top of the cross, declaring the cause for which he was crucified, v. 19. Matthew called it, *αἰτία*—the accusation; Mark and Luke called it, *ἐπιγραφή*—the inscription; John calls it by the proper Latin name, *titulus*—the title: and it was this, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*. Pilate intended this for his reproach, that he, being *Jesus of Nazareth*, should pretend to be king of the Jews, and set up in competition with Cæsar, to whom Pilate would thus recommend himself, as very jealous for his honour and interest, when he would treat but a titular king, a king in metaphor, as the worst of malefactors; but God overruled this matter, (1.) That it might be a further testimony to the innocency of our Lord Jesus; for here was an accusation which, as it was worded, contained no crime. If this be all they have to lay to his charge, surely he has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. (2.) That it might show forth his dignity and honour. This is Jesus a Saviour, *Ναζωραῖος*, the blessed Nazarite, sanctified to God; this is the king of the Jews, *Messiah the prince*, the sceptre that should rise out of Israel, as Balaam had foretold; dying for the good of his people, as Caiaphas had foretold. Thus all these three bad men witnessed to Christ, though they meant not so.

2. The notice taken of this inscription (v. 20): *Many of the Jews read it*, not only those of Jerusalem, but those out of the country, and from other countries, strangers and proselytes, that came up to worship at the feast. Multitudes read it, and it occasioned a great variety of reflections and speculations, as men stood affected. Christ himself was set for a sign, a title. Here are two reasons why the title was so much read:—(1.) Because the place where Jesus was crucified, though without the gate, was yet nigh the city, which intimates that if it had been any great distance off they would not have been led, no not by their curiosity, to go and see it, and read it. It is an advantage to have the means of knowing Christ brought to our doors. (2.) Because it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, which made it legible by all; they all understood one or other of these languages, and none were more careful to bring up their children to read than the Jews generally were. It likewise made it the more considerable; every one would be curious to enquire what it was which was so industriously published in the three most known languages. In the Hebrew the oracles of God were recorded; in Greek the learning of the philosophers; and in Latin the laws of the empire. In each of



these Christ is proclaimed king, in whom are hid all the treasures of revelation, wisdom, and power. God so ordering it that this should be written in the three then most known tongues, it was intimated thereby that Jesus Christ should be a Saviour to all nations, and not to the Jews only; and also that every nation should hear in *their own tongue the wonderful works* of the Redeemer. Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, were the vulgar languages at that time in this part of the world; so that this is so far from intimating (as the Papists would have it) that the scripture is still to be retained in these three languages, that on the contrary it teaches us that the knowledge of Christ ought to be diffused throughout every nation in their own tongue, as the proper vehicle of it, that people may converse as freely with the scriptures as they do with their neighbours.

3. The offence which the prosecutors took at it, *v. 21*. They would not have it written, *the king of the Jews*; but that he said of himself, *I am the king of the Jews*. Here they show themselves, (1.) Very spiteful and malicious against Christ. It was not enough to have him crucified, but they must have his name crucified too. To justify themselves in giving him such bad treatment, they thought themselves concerned to give him a bad character, and to represent him as a usurper of honours and powers that he was not entitled to. (2.) Foolishly jealous of the honour of their nation. Though they were a conquered and enslaved people, yet they stood so much upon the punctilio of their reputation that they scorned to have it said that this was their king. (3.) Very impertinent and troublesome to Pilate. They could not but be sensible that they had forced him, against his mind, to condemn Christ, and yet, in such a trivial thing as this, they continue to tease him; and it was so much the worse in that, though they had charged him with pretending to be the king of the Jews, yet they had not proved it, nor had he ever said so.

4. The judge's resolution to adhere to it: "*What I have written I have written, and will not alter it to humour them.*"

(1.) Hereby an affront was put upon the chief priests, who would still be dictating. It seems, by Pilate's manner of speaking, that he was uneasy in himself for yielding to them, and vexed at them for forcing him to it, and therefore he was resolved to be cross with them; and by this inscription he insinuates, [1.] That, notwithstanding their pretences, they were not sincere in their affections to Cæsar and his government; they were willing enough to have a king of the Jews, if they could have one to their mind. [2.] That such a king as this, so mean and despicable, was good enough to be the king of the Jews; and this would be the fate of all that should dare to oppose the Roman power. [3.] That they had been very unjust

and unreasonable in prosecuting this Jesus, when there was no fault to be found in him.

(2.) Hereby honour was done to the Lord Jesus. Pilate stuck to it with resolution, that he was the king of the Jews. What he had written was what God had first written, and therefore he could not alter it; for thus it was written, that Messiah the prince should be *cut off*, Dan. ix. 26. This therefore is the true cause of his death; he dies because the king of Israel must die, must thus die. When the Jews reject Christ, and will not have him for their king, Pilate, a Gentile, sticks to it that he is a king, which was an earnest of what came to pass soon after, when the Gentiles submitted to the kingdom of the Messiah, which the unbelieving Jews had rebelled against.

II. The dividing of his garments among the executioners, *v. 23, 24*. Four soldiers were employed, who, *when they had crucified Jesus*, had nailed him to the cross, and lifted it up, and him upon it, and nothing more was to be done than to wait his expiring through the extremity of pain, as, with us, when the prisoner is turned off, then they went to make a dividend of his clothes, each claiming an equal share, and so they *made four parts*, as nearly of the same value as they could, *to every soldier a part*; but his *coat*, or upper garment whether cloak or gown, being a pretty piece of curiosity, *without seam, woven from the top throughout*, they agreed to *cast lots for it*. Here observe, 1. The shame they put upon our Lord Jesus, in stripping him of his garments before they crucified him. The shame of nakedness came in with sin. He therefore who was made sin for us bore that shame, to roll away our reproach. He was stripped, that we might be clothed with *white raiment* (Rev. iii. 18), and that when we are unclothed *we may not be found naked*. 2. The wages with which these soldiers paid themselves for crucifying Christ. They were willing to do it for his old clothes. Nothing is to be done so bad, but there will be found men bad enough to do it for a trifle. Probably they hoped to make more than ordinary advantage of his clothes, having heard of cures wrought by the touch of the hem of his garment, or expecting that his admirers would give any money for them. 3. The sport they made about his seamless coat. We read not of any thing about him valuable or remarkable but this, and this not for the richness, but only the variety of it, for it was *woven from the top throughout*; there was no curiosity therefore in the shape, but a designed plainness. Tradition says, his mother wove it for him, and adds this further, that it was made for him when he was a child, and, like the Israelites' clothes in the wilderness, *waxed not old*; but this is a groundless fancy. The soldiers thought it a pity to rend it, for then it would unravel, and a piece of it would be good for nothing; they would *therefore cast lots for it*. While Christ was

in his dying agonies, they were merrily dividing his spoils. The preserving of Christ's seamless coat is commonly alluded to to show the care all Christians ought to take that they rend not the church of Christ with strifes and divisions; yet some have observed that the reason why the soldiers would not rend Christ's coat was not out of any respect to Christ, but because each of them hoped to have it entire for himself. And so many cry out against schism, only that they may engross all the wealth and power to themselves. Those who opposed Luther's separation from the church of Rome urged much the *tunica inconsutilis*—the seamless coat; and some of them laid so much stress upon it that they were called the *Inconsutilistæ*—The seamless.

4. The fulfilling of the scripture in this. David, in spirit, foretold this very circumstance of Christ's sufferings, in that passage, Ps. xxii. 18. The event so exactly answering the prediction proves, (1.) That the scripture is the word of God, which foretold contingent events concerning Christ so long before, and they came to pass according to the prediction. (2.) That Jesus is the true Messiah; for in him all the Old-Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah had, and have, their full accomplishment. *These things therefore the soldiers did.*

III. The care that he took of his poor mother.

1. His mother attends him to his death (v. 25): *There stood by the cross*, as near as they could get, *his mother*, and some of his relations and friends with her. At first, they stood near, as it is said here; but afterwards, it is probable, the soldiers forced them to stand afar off, as it is said in Matthew and Mark: or they themselves removed out of the ground. (1.) See here the tender affection of these pious women to our Lord Jesus in his sufferings. When all his disciples, except John, had forsaken him, they continued their attendance on him. Thus the feeble were as David (Zech. xii. 8): they were not deterred by the fury of the enemy nor the horror of the sight; they could not rescue him nor relieve him, yet they attended him, to show their good-will. It is an impious and blasphemous construction which some of the popish writers put upon the virgin Mary standing by the cross, that thereby she contributed to the satisfaction he made for sin no less than he did, and so became a joint-mediatrix and co-adjutrix in our salvation. (2.) We may easily suppose what an affliction it was to these poor women to see him thus abused, especially to the blessed virgin. Now was fulfilled Simeon's word, *A sword shall pierce through thy own soul*, Luke ii. 35. His torments were her tortures; she was upon the rack, while he was upon the cross; and her heart bled with his wounds; and the reproaches wherewith they reproached him fell on those that attended him. (3.) We may justly admire the power of divine grace in supporting these women, especially the virgin

Mary, under this heavy trial. We do not find his mother wringing her hands, or tearing her hair, or rending her clothes, or making an outcry; but, with a wonderful composure, *standing by the cross*, and her friends with her. Surely she and they were strengthened by a divine power to this degree of patience; and surely the virgin Mary had a fuller expectation of his resurrection than the rest had, which supported her thus. We know not what we can bear till we are tried, and then we know who has said, *My grace is sufficient for thee*.

2. He tenderly provides for his mother at his death. It is probable that Joseph, her husband, was long since dead, and that her son Jesus had supported her, and her relation to him had been her maintenance; and now that he was dying what would become of her? He saw her standing by, and knew her cares and griefs; and he saw John standing not far off, and so he settled a new relation between his beloved mother and his beloved disciple; for he said to her, "*Woman, behold thy son*, for whom henceforward thou must have a motherly affection;" and to him, "*Behold thy mother*, to whom thou must pay a filial duty." And so from that hour, that hour never to be forgotten, *that disciple took her to his own home*. See here,

(1.) The care Christ took of his dear mother. He was not so much taken up with a sense of his sufferings as to forget his friends, all whose concerns he bore upon his heart. His mother, perhaps, was so taken up with his sufferings that she thought not of what would become of her; but he admitted that thought. *Silver and gold he had none* to leave, no estate, real or personal; his clothes the soldiers had seized, and we hear no more of the bag since Judas, who had carried it, hanged himself. He had therefore no other way to provide for his mother than by his interest in a friend, which he does here. [1.] He calls her *woman*, not mother, not out of any disrespect to her, but because mother would have been a cutting word to her that was already wounded to the heart with grief; like Isaac saying to Abraham, *My father*. He speaks as one that was *now no more in this world*, but was already dead to those in it that were dearest to him. His speaking in this seemingly slight manner to his mother, as he had done formerly, was designed to obviate and give a check to the undue honours which he foresaw would be given to her in the Romish church, as if she were a joint purchaser with him in the honours of the Redeemer [2.] He directs her to look upon John as her son: "*Behold him as thy son*, who stands there by thee, and be as a mother to him." See here, *First*, An instance of divine goodness, to be observed for our encouragement. Sometimes, when God removes one comfort from us, he raises up another for us, perhaps where we looked not for it. We read of children which the church



shall have after she has lost the other, Isa. xlix. 21. Let none therefore reckon all gone with one cistern dried up, for from the same fountain another may be filled. *Secondly*, An instance of filial duty, to be observed for our imitation. Christ has here taught children to provide, to the utmost of their power, for the comfort of their aged parents. When David was in distress, he took care of his parents, and found out a shelter for them (1 Sam. xxii. 3); so the Son of David here. Children at their death, according to their ability, should provide for their parents, if they survive them, and need their kindness.

(2.) The confidence here reposed in the beloved disciple. It is to him he says, *Behold thy mother*, that is, I recommend her to thy care, be thou as a son to her to guide her (Isa. li. 18); and *forsake her not when she is old*, Prov. xxiii. 22. Now, [1.] This was an honour put upon John, and a testimony both to his prudence and to his fidelity. If he who knows all things had not known that John loved him, he would not have made him his mother's guardian. It is a great honour to be employed for Christ, and to be entrusted with any of his interest in the world. But, [2.] It would be a care and some charge to John; but he cheerfully accepted it, and took her to his own home, not objecting the trouble nor expense, nor his obligations to his own family, nor the ill-will he might contract by it. Note, Those that truly love Christ, and are beloved of him, will be glad of an opportunity to do any service to him or his. *Nicophoras's Eccl. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 3*, saith that the virgin Mary lived with John at Jerusalem eleven years, and then died. Others, that she lived to remove with him to Ephesus.

IV. The fulfilling of the scripture, in the giving of him vinegar to drink, v. 28, 29. Observe,

1. How much respect Christ showed to the scripture (v. 28): *Knowing that all things hitherto were accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled*, which spoke of his drinking in his sufferings, *he saith, I thirst*, that is, he called for drink.

(1.) It was not at all strange that he was thirsty; we find him *thirsty* in a journey (ch. iv. 6, 7), and now thirsty when he was just at his journey's end. Well might he thirst after all the toil and hurry which he had undergone, and being now in the agonies of death, ready to expire purely by the loss of blood and extremity of pain. The torments of hell are represented by a violent thirst in the complaint of the rich man that begged for a drop of water to cool his tongue. To that everlasting thirst we had been condemned, had not Christ suffered for us.

(2.) But the reason of his complaining of it is somewhat surprising; it is the only word he spoke that looked like complaint of his outward sufferings. When they scourged him, and crowned him with thorns, he did not cry, O my head! or, My back! But now

he cried, *I thirst*. For, [1.] He would thus express the travail of his soul, Isa. liii. 11. He thirsted after the glorifying of God, and the accomplishment of the work of our redemption, and the happy issue of his undertaking. [2.] He would thus take care to see the scripture fulfilled. Hitherto, all had been accomplished, and he knew it, for this was the thing he had carefully observed all along; and now he called to mind one thing more, which this was the proper season for the performance of. By this it appears that he was the Messiah, in that not only the scripture was punctually fulfilled in him, but it was strictly eyed by him. By this it appears that God was with him of a truth—that in all he did he went exactly according to the word of God, taking care not to destroy, but to fulfil, the law and the prophets. Now, *First*, The scripture had foretold his thirst, and therefore he himself related it, because it could not otherwise be known, saying, *I thirst*; it was foretold that his tongue should cleave to his jaws, Ps. xxii. 15. Samson, an eminent type of Christ, when he was laying the Philistines heaps upon heaps, was himself sore athirst (Judg. xv. 18); so was Christ, when he was upon the cross, *spoiling principalities and powers*. *Secondly*, The scripture had foretold that in his thirst he should have vinegar given him to drink, Ps. lxix. 21. They had given him vinegar to drink before they crucified him (Matt. xxvii. 34), but the prophecy was not exactly fulfilled in that, because that was not in his thirst; therefore now he said, *I thirst*, and called for it again: then he would not drink, but now he received it. Christ would rather court an affront than see any prophecy unfulfilled. This should satisfy us under all our trials, that the will of God is done, and the word of God accomplished.

2. See how little respect his persecutors showed to him (v. 29): *There was set a vessel full of vinegar*, probably according to the custom at all executions of this nature; or, as others think, it was now set designedly for an abuse to Christ, instead of the cup of wine which they used to give to those that were ready to perish; with this they filled a sponge, for they would not allow him a cup, and they put it upon hyssop, a hyssop-stalk, and with this heaved it to his mouth; ὑσσώπῳ περιβύτης—they stuck it round with hyssop; so it may be taken; or, as others, they mingled it with hyssop-water, and this they gave him to drink when he was thirsty; a drop of water would have cooled his tongue better than a draught of vinegar: yet this he submitted to for us. *We had taken the sour grapes, and thus his teeth were set on edge*; we had forfeited all comforts and refreshments, and therefore they were withheld from him. When heaven denied him a beam of light earth denied him a drop of water, and put vinegar in the room of it.

V. The dying word wherewith he breathed

out his soul (v. 30). *When he had received the vinegar*, as much of it, as he thought fit, *he said, It is finished*; and, with that, *bowed his head, and gave up the ghost*. Observe,

1. What he said, and we may suppose him to say it with triumph and exultation, *Τετέλεσται—It is finished*, a comprehensive word, and a comfortable one. (1.) *It is finished*, that is, the malice and enmity of his persecutors had now done their worst; *when he had received that last indignity in the vinegar they gave him*, *he said*, "This is the last; I am now going out of their reach, *where the wicked cease from troubling*." (2.) *It is finished*, that is, the counsel and commandment of his Father concerning his sufferings were now fulfilled; it was a *determinate counsel*, and he took care to see every iota and tittle of it exactly answered, Acts ii. 23. He had said, when he entered upon his sufferings, *Father, thy will be done*; and now he saith with pleasure, *It is done*. It was *his meat and drink to finish his work* (ch. iv. 34), and the meat and drink refreshed him, when they gave him gall and vinegar. (3.) *It is finished*, that is, all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which pointed at the sufferings of the Messiah, were accomplished and answered. He speaks as if, now that *they had given him the vinegar*, he could not bethink himself of any word in the Old Testament that was to be fulfilled between him and his death but it had its accomplishment; such as, his being *sold for thirty pieces of silver*, *his hands and feet being pierced*, *his garments divided*, &c.; and now that this is done, *It is finished*. (4.) *It is finished*, that is, the ceremonial law is abolished, and a period put to the obligation of it. The substance is now come, and all the shadows are done away. Just now *the veil is rent*, *the wall of partition is taken down*, *even the law of commandments contained in ordinances*, Eph. ii. 14, 15. The Mosaic economy is dissolved, *to make way for a better hope*. (5.) *It is finished*, that is, sin is finished, and an end made of transgression, *by the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness*. It seems to refer to Dan. ix. 24. *The Lamb of God was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world*, and it is done, Heb. ix. 26. (6.) *It is finished*, that is, his sufferings were now finished, both those of his soul and those of his body. The storm is over, the worst is past; all his pains and agonies are at an end, and he is just going to paradise, entering upon *the joy set before him*. Let all that *suffer for Christ*, and with Christ, comfort themselves with this, *that yet a little while* and they also shall say, *It is finished*. (7.) *It is finished*, that is, his life was now finished, he was just ready to breathe his last, and *now he is no more in this world*, ch. xvii. 11. This is like that of blessed Paul (2 Tim. iv. 7), *I have finished my course*, my race is run, my glass is out, *mene, mene—numbered and finished*. This we must all come to shortly. (8.) *It is finished*, that is, the work of man's re-

demption and salvation is now completed, at least the hardest part of the undertaking is over; a full satisfaction is made to the justice of God, a fatal blow given to the power of Satan, a fountain of grace opened that shall ever flow, a foundation of peace and happiness laid that shall never fail. Christ had now gone through with his work, and *finished it*, ch. xvii. 4. For, *as for God, his work is perfect*; *when I begin*, saith he, *I will also make an end*. And, as in the purchase, so in the application of the redemption, *he that has begun a good work will perform it*; the mystery of God shall be finished.

2. What he did: *He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost*. He was voluntary in dying; for he was not only the sacrifice, but the priest and the offerer; and the *animus offerentis—the mind of the offerer*, was all in all in the sacrifice. Christ showed his will in his sufferings, *by which will we are sanctified*. (1.) *He gave up the ghost*. His life was not forcibly extorted from him, but freely resigned. He had said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit*, thereby expressing the intention of this act. I give up myself as a *ransom for many*; and, accordingly, he did give up his spirit, paid down the price of pardon and life at his Father's hands. *Father, glorify thy name*. (2.) *He bowed his head*. Those that were crucified, in dying stretched up their heads to gasp for breath, and did not drop their heads till they had breathed their last; but Christ, to show himself active in dying, *bowed his head first*, composing himself, as it were, to fall asleep. *God had laid upon him the iniquity of us all*, putting it upon the head of this great sacrifice; and some think that by this bowing of his head he would intimate his sense of the weight upon him. See Ps. xxxviii. 4; xl. 12. The bowing of his head shows his submission to his Father's will, and his obedience to death. He accommodated himself to his dying work, as Jacob, *who gathered up his feet into the bed, and then yielded up the ghost*.

31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 Then came the soldiers. and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. 35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true.



and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. 36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

This passage concerning the piercing of Christ's side after his death is recorded only by this evangelist.

I. Observe the superstition of the Jews, which occasioned it (v. 31): *Because it was the preparation for the sabbath, and that sabbath day*, because it fell in the passover-week, *was a high day*, that they might show a veneration for the sabbath, they would not have the dead bodies to remain on the crosses on the sabbath-day, but besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, which would be a certain, but cruel dispatch, and that then they might be buried out of sight. Note here, 1. The esteem they would be thought to have for the approaching sabbath, because it was one of the days of unleavened bread, and (some reckon) the day of the offering of the first-fruits. Every sabbath day is a holy day, and a good day, but this was a high day, *μεγάλη ἡμέρα—a great day*. Passover sabbaths are high days; sacrament-days, supper-days, communion-days are high days, and there ought to be more than ordinary preparation for them, that these may be high days indeed to us, *as the days of heaven*. 2. The reproach which they reckoned it would be to that day if the dead bodies should be left hanging on the crosses. Dead bodies were not to be left at any time (Deut. xxi. 23); yet, in this case, the Jews would have left the Roman custom to take place, had it not been an extraordinary day; and, many strangers from all parts being then at Jerusalem, it would have been an offence to them; nor could they well bear the sight of Christ's crucified body, for, unless their consciences were quite seared, when the heat of their rage was a little over, they would upbraid them. 3. Their petition to Pilate, that their bodies, now as good as dead, might be dispatched; not by strangling or beheading them, which would have been a compassionate hastening of them out of their misery, like the *coup de grace* (as the French call it) to those that are broken upon the wheel, *the stroke of mercy*, but by the breaking of their legs, which would carry them off in the most exquisite pain. Note, (1.) *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel*. (2.) The pretended sanctity of hypocrites is abominable. These Jews would be thought to bear a great regard for the sabbath, and yet had no regard to justice and righteousness; they made no conscience of bringing an innocent and excellent person to the cross, and yet scrupled letting a dead body hang upon the cross.

II. The dispatching of the two thieves that  
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were crucified with him, v. 32. Pilate was still gratifying the Jews, and gave orders as they desired; *and the soldiers came, hardened against all impressions of pity, and broke the legs of the two thieves*, which, no doubt, extorted from them hideous outcries, and made them die according to the bloody disposition of Nero, so as to feel themselves die. One of these thieves was a penitent, and had received from Christ an assurance that he should shortly be with him in paradise, and yet died in the same pain and misery that the other thief did; *for all things come alike to all*. Many go to heaven that have bands in their death, and die in the bitterness of their soul. The extremity of dying agonies is no obstruction to the living comforts that wait for holy souls on the other side death. Christ died, and went to paradise, but appointed a guard to convey him thither. This is the order of going to heaven—*Christ, the first-fruits and forerunner, afterwards those that are Christ's*.

III. The trial that was made whether Christ was dead or no, and the putting of it out of doubt.

1. They supposed him to be dead, and therefore *did not break his legs*, v. 33. Observe here, (1.) That Jesus died in less time than persons crucified ordinarily did. The structure of his body, perhaps, being extraordinarily fine and tender, was the sooner broken by pain; or, rather, it was to show that he laid down his life of himself, and could die when he pleased, though his hands were nailed. Though he yielded to death, yet he was not conquered. (2.) That his enemies were satisfied he was really dead. The Jews, who stood by to see the execution effectually done, would not have omitted this piece of cruelty, if they had not been sure he was got out of the reach of it. (3.) *Whatever devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand*. It was fully designed to break his legs, but, God's counsel being otherwise, see how it was prevented.

2. Because they would be sure he was dead they made such an experiment as would put it past dispute. *One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side*, aiming at his heart, and *forthwith came thereout blood and water*, v. 34.

(1.) The soldier hereby designed to decide the question whether he was dead or no, and by this honourable wound in his side to supersede the ignominious method of dispatch they took with the other two. Tradition says that this soldier's name was *Longinus*, and that, having some distemper in his eyes, he was immediately cured of it, by some drops of blood that flowed out of Christ's side falling on them: significant enough, if we had any good authority for the story.

(2.) But God had a further design herein, which was,

[1.] To give an evidence of the truth of his death, in order to the proof of his resurrection. If he was only in a trance or swoon, his resurrection was a sham; but, by this ex-

periment, he was certainly dead, for this spear broke up the very fountains of life, and, according to all the law and course of nature, it was impossible a human body should survive such a wound as this in the vitals, and such an evacuation thence.

[2.] To give an illustration of the design of his death. There was much of mystery in it, and its being so solemnly attested (v. 35) intimates there was something miraculous in it, that *the blood and water* should come out distinct and separate from the same wound; at least it was very significant; this same apostle refers to it as a very considerable thing, 1 John v. 6, 8.

First, the opening of his side was significant. When we would protest our sincerity, we wish there were a window in our hearts, that the thoughts and intents of them might be visible to all. Through this window, opened in Christ's side, you may look into his heart, and see love flaming there, love strong as death; see our names written there. Some make it an allusion to the opening of Adam's side in innocency. When Christ, the second Adam, was fallen into a deep sleep upon the cross, then was his side opened, and out of it was his church taken, which he espoused to himself. See Eph. v. 30, 32. Our devout poet, Mr. George Herbert, in his poem called *The Bag*, very affectingly brings in our Saviour, when his side was pierced, thus speaking to his disciples:—

If ye have any thing to send, or write  
(I have no bag, but here is room),  
Unto my Father's hands and sight  
(Believe me) it shall safely come.  
That I shall mind what you impart,  
Look, you may put it very near my heart;  
Or, if hereafter any of my friends  
Will use me in this kind, the door  
Shall still be open; what he sends  
I will present, and somewhat more,  
Not to his hurt. Sighs will convey  
Any thing to me. Hark, Despair, away.

Secondly, *The blood and water* that flowed out of it were significant. 1. They signified the two great benefits which all believers partake of through Christ—justification and sanctification; blood for remission, water for regeneration; blood for atonement, water for purification. Blood and water were used very much under the law. Guilt contracted must be expiated by blood; stains contracted must be done away by *the water of purification*. These two must always go together. *You are sanctified, you are justified*, 1 Cor. vi. 11. Christ has joined them together, and we must not think to put them asunder. They both flowed from the pierced side of our Redeemer. To Christ crucified we owe both merit for our justification, and Spirit and grace for our sanctification; and we have as much need of the latter as of the former, 1 Cor. i. 30. 2. They signified the two great ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, by which those benefits are represented, sealed, and applied, to believers; they both owe their institution and efficacy to Christ. It is not the water in the font that will be to us *the wash-*

*ing of regeneration*, but the water out of the side of Christ; not the blood of the grape that will pacify the conscience and refresh the soul, but the blood out of the side of Christ. Now was the rock smitten (1 Cor. x. 4), now was the fountain opened (Zech. xiii. 1), now were the wells of salvation digged, Isa. xii. 3. *Here is the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God.*

IV. The attestation of the truth of this by an eye-witness (v. 35), the evangelist himself. Observe,

1. What a competent witness he was of the matters of fact. (1.) What he bore record of he saw; he had it not by hearsay, nor was it only his own conjecture, but he was an eye-witness of it; it is *what we have seen and looked upon* (1 John i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 16), and *had perfect understanding of*, Luke i. 3. (2.) What he saw he faithfully bore record of; as a faithful witness, he told not only the truth, but the whole truth; and did not only attest it by word of mouth, but left it upon record in writing, *in perpetuum rei memoriam—for a perpetual memorial*. (3.) *His record is undoubtedly true*; for he wrote not only from his own personal knowledge and observation, but from the dictates of the Spirit of truth, that leads into all truth. (4.) He had himself a full assurance of the truth of what he wrote, and did not persuade others to believe that which he did not believe himself: *He knows that he saith true*. (5.) He therefore witnessed these things, *that we might believe*; he did not record them merely for his own satisfaction or the private use of his friends, but made them public to the world; not to please the curious nor entertain the ingenious, but to draw men to believe the gospel in order to their eternal welfare.

2. What care he showed in this particular instance. That we may be well assured of the truth of Christ's death, he saw his heart's blood, his life's blood, let out; and also of the benefits that flow to us from his death, signified by the blood and water which came out of his side. Let this silence the fears of weak Christians, and encourage their hopes, *iniquity shall not be their ruin*, for there came both water and blood out of Christ's pierced side, both to justify and sanctify them; and if you ask, How can we be sure of this? You may be sure, for *he that saw it bore record*.

V. The accomplishment of the scripture in all this (v. 36): *That the scripture might be fulfilled*, and so both the honour of the Old Testament preserved and the truth of the New Testament confirmed. Here are two instances of it together:—

1. The scripture was fulfilled in the preserving of his legs from being broken; therein that word was fulfilled, *A bone of him shall not be broken*. (1.) There was a promise of this made indeed to all *the righteous*, but principally pointing at *Jesus Christ the righteous* (Ps. xxxiv. 20): *He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken*. And David,



in spirit, says, *All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?* Ps. xxxv. 10. (2.) There was a type of this in the paschal lamb, which seems to be especially referred to here (Exod. xii. 46): *Neither shall you break a bone thereof*; and it is repeated (Num. ix. 12), *You shall not break any bone of it*; for which law the will of the law-maker is the reason, but the antitype must answer the type. *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*, 1 Cor. v. 7. He is the *Lamb of God* (ch. i. 29), and, as the true passover, his bones were kept unbroken. This commandment was given concerning his bones, when dead, as of Joseph's, Heb. xi. 22. (3.) There was a significancy in it; the strength of the body is in the bones. The Hebrew word for the bones signifies the strength, and therefore *not a bone of Christ must be broken*, to show that though he be crucified in weakness his strength to save is not at all broken. Sin breaks our bones, as it broke David's (Ps. li. 8); but it did not break Christ's bones; he stood firm under the burden, mighty to save.

2. The scripture was fulfilled in the piercing of his side (v. 37): *They shall look on me whom they had pierced*; so it is written, Zech. xii. 10. And there the same that pours out the Spirit of grace, and can be no less than the God of the holy prophets, says, *They shall look upon me*, which is here applied to Christ, *They shall look upon him*. (1.) It is here implied that the Messiah shall be pierced; and here it had a more full accomplishment than in the piercing of his hands and feet; he was pierced by the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, wounded in the house of his friends, as it follows, Zech. xiii. 6. (2.) It is promised that when the Spirit is poured out they shall look on him and mourn. This was in part fulfilled when many of those that were his betrayers and murderers were pricked to the heart, and brought to believe in him; it will be further fulfilled, in mercy, when all Israel shall be saved; and, in wrath, when those who persisted in their infidelity shall see him whom they have pierced, and wail because of him, Rev. i. 7. But it is applicable to us all. We have all been guilty of piercing the Lord Jesus, and are all concerned with suitable affections to look on him.

38 And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. 39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. 40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the

spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. 41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. 42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

We have here an account of the burial of the blessed body of our Lord Jesus. The solemn funerals of great men are usually looked at with curiosity; the mournful funerals of dear friends are attended with concern. Come and see an extraordinary funeral; never was the like! Come and see a burial that conquered the grave, and buried it, a burial that beautified the grave and softened it for all believers. *Let us turn aside now, and see this great sight*. Here is,

I. The body begged, v. 38. This was done by the interest of Joseph of Ramah, or Arimathea, of whom no mention is made in all the New-Testament story, but only in the narrative which each of the evangelists gives us of Christ's burial, wherein he was chiefly concerned. Observe, 1. The character of this Joseph. He was a disciple of Christ *incognito—in secret*, a better friend to Christ than he would willingly be known to be. It was his honour that he was a disciple of Christ; and some such there are, that are themselves great men, and unavoidably linked with bad men. But it was his weakness that he was so secretly, when he should have confessed Christ before men, yea, though he had lost his preferment by it. Disciples should openly own themselves, yet Christ may have many that are his disciples sincerely, though secretly; better secretly than not at all, especially if, like Joseph here, they grow stronger and stronger. Some who in less trials have been timorous, yet in greater have been very courageous; so Joseph here. He concealed his affection to Christ for fear of the Jews, lest they should put him out of the synagogue, at least out of the sanhedrim, which was all they could do. To Pilate the governor he went boldly, and yet feared the Jews. The impotent malice of those that can but censure, and revile, and clamour, is sometimes more formidable even to wise and good men than one would think. 2. The part he bore in this affair. He, having by his place access to Pilate, desired leave of him to dispose of the body. His mother and dear relations had neither spirit nor interest to attempt such a thing. His disciples were gone; if nobody appeared, the Jews or soldiers would bury him with the thieves; therefore God raised up this gentleman to interpose in it, that the scripture might be fulfilled, and the decorum owing to his approaching resurrection maintained. Note, When God has work to do he can find out such as are proper to do it, and embolden



them for it. Observe it as an instance of the humiliation of Christ, that his dead body lay at the mercy of a heathen judge, and must be begged before it could be buried, and also that Joseph would not take the body of Christ till he had asked and obtained leave of the governor; for in those things wherein the power of the magistrate is concerned we must ever pay a deference to that power, and peaceably submit to it.

II. The embalming prepared, *v.* 39. This was done by Nicodemus, another person of quality, and in a public post. He brought a *mixture of myrrh and aloes*, which some think were bitter ingredients, to preserve the body, others fragrant ones, to perfume it. Here is, 1. The character of Nicodemus, which is much the same with that of Joseph; he was a secret friend to Christ, though not his constant follower. He at first *came to Jesus by night*, but now owned him publicly, as before, *ch.* vii. 50, 51. That grace which at first is like a bruised reed may afterwards become like a strong cedar, and the trembling lamb *bold as a lion*. See *Rom.* xiv. 4. It is a wonder that Joseph and Nicodemus, men of such interest, did not appear sooner, and solicit Pilate not to condemn Christ, especially seeing him so loth to do it. Begging his life would have been a nobler piece of service than begging his body. But Christ would have none of his friends to endeavour to prevent his death when his hour was come. While his persecutors were forwarding the accomplishment of the scriptures, his followers must not obstruct it. 2. The kindness of Nicodemus, which was considerable, though of a different nature. Joseph served Christ with his interest, Nicodemus with his purse. Probably, they agreed it between them, that, while one was procuring the grant, the other should be preparing the spices; and this for expedition, because they were straitened in time. But why did they make this ado about Christ's dead body? (1.) Some think we may see in it the weakness of their faith. A firm belief of the resurrection of Christ on the third day would have saved them this care and cost, and have been more acceptable than all spices. Those bodies indeed to whom the grave is a long home need to be clad accordingly; but what need of such furniture of the grave for one that, like a way-faring man, did but turn aside into it, to *tarry for a night or two*? (2.) However, we may plainly see in it the strength of their love. Hereby they showed the value they had for his person and doctrine, and that it was not lessened by the reproach of the cross. Those that had been so industrious to profane his crown, and lay his honour in the dust, might already see that they had imagined a vain thing; for, as God had done him honour in his sufferings, so did men too, even great men. They showed not only the charitable respect of committing his body to the earth, but the

honourable respect shown to great men. This they might do, and yet believe and look for his resurrection; nay, this they might do in the belief and expectation of it. Since God designed honour for this body, they would put honour upon it. However, we must do our duty according as the present day and opportunity are, and leave it to God to fulfil his promises in his own way and time.

III. The body got ready, *v.* 40. They took it into some house adjoining, and, having washed it from blood and dust, *wound it in linen clothes* very decently, with the spices melted down, it is likely, into an ointment, as *the manner of the Jews is to bury*, or to *embalm* (so Dr. Hammond), as we sear dead bodies. 1. Here was care taken of Christ's body: It was *wound in linen clothes*. Among clothing that belongs to us, Christ put on even the grave-clothes, to make them easy to us, and to enable us to call them our wedding-clothes. They wound the body *with the spices, for all his garments*; his grave-clothes not excepted, *smell of myrrh and aloes* (the spices here mentioned) *out of the ivory palaces* (*Ps.* xlv. 8), and an ivory palace the sepulchre hewn out of a rock was to Christ. Dead bodies and graves are noisome and offensive; hence sin is compared to a *body of death* and an *open sepulchre*; but Christ's sacrifice, being to God as a sweet-smelling savour, hath taken away our pollution. No ointment or perfume can rejoice the heart so as the grave of our Redeemer does, where there is faith to perceive the fragrant odours of it. 2. In conformity to this example, we ought to have regard to the dead bodies of Christians; not to enshrine and adore their relics, no, not those of the most eminent saints and martyrs (nothing like that was done to the dead body of Christ himself), but carefully to deposit them, the dust in the dust, as those who believe that the dead bodies of the saints are still united to Christ and designed for glory and immortality at the last day. The resurrection of the saints will be in virtue of Christ's resurrection, and therefore in burying them we should have an eye to Christ's burial, for he, being dead, thus speaketh. *Thy dead men shall live*, *Isa.* xxvi. 19. In burying our dead it is not necessary that in all circumstances we imitate the burial of Christ, as if we must be buried in linen, and in a garden, and be embalmed as he was; but his being buried after *the manner of the Jews* teaches us that in things of this nature we should conform to the usages of the country where we live, except in those that are superstitious.

IV. The grave pitched upon, in a garden which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, very near the place where he was crucified. There was a sepulchre, or vault, prepared for the first occasion, but not yet used. Observe,

1. That Christ was buried without the city, for thus the manner of the Jews was to bury, not in their cities, much less in their synagogues,



which some have thought better than our way of burying: yet there was then a peculiar reason for it, which does not hold now, because the touching of a grave contracted a ceremonial pollution: but now that the resurrection of Christ has altered the property of the grave, and done away its pollution for all believers, we need not keep at such a distance from it; nor is it incapable of a good improvement, to have the congregation of the dead in the church-yard, encompassing the congregation of the living in the church, since they also are dying, and in *the midst of life we are in death*. Those that would not superstitiously, but by faith, visit the holy sepulchre, must go forth out of the noise of this world.

2. That Christ was buried in a garden. Observe, (1.) That Joseph had his sepulchre in his garden; so he contrived it, that it might be a memento, [1.] To himself while living; when he was taking the pleasure of his garden, and reaping the products of it, let him think of dying, and be quickened to prepare for it. The garden is a proper place for meditation, and a sepulchre there may furnish us with a proper subject for meditation, and such a one as we are loth to admit in the midst of our pleasures. [2.] To his heirs and successors when he was gone. It is good to acquaint ourselves with the *place of our fathers' sepulchres*; and perhaps we might make our own less formidable if we made theirs more familiar. (2.) That in a sepulchre in a garden Christ's body was laid. In the garden of Eden death and the grave first received their power, and now in a garden they are conquered, disarmed, and triumphed over. In a garden Christ began his passion, and from a garden he would rise, and begin his exaltation. Christ fell to the ground *as a corn of wheat* (ch. xii. 24), and therefore was sown in a garden among the seeds, for *his dew is as the dew of herbs*, Isa. xxvi. 19. He is *the fountain of gardens*, Cant. iv. 15.

3. That he was buried in a new sepulchre. This was so ordered, (1.) For the honour of Christ; he was not a common person, and therefore must not mix with common dust. He that was born from a virgin-womb must rise from a virgin-tomb. (2.) For the confirming of the truth of his resurrection, that it might not be suggested that it was not he, but some other that rose now, when many bodies of saints arose; or, that he rose by the power of some other, as the man that was raised by the touch of Elisha's bones, and not by his own power. He that has *made all things new* has new-made the grave for us.

V. The funeral solemnized (v. 42): *There laid they Jesus*, that is, the dead body of Jesus. Some think the calling of this *Jesus* intimates the inseparable union between the divine and human nature. Even this dead body was *Jesus—a Saviour*, for his death is our life; Jesus is still the same, Heb. xiii. 8. There they laid him because it was the preparation day.

1. Observe here the deference which the

Jews paid to the sabbath, and to the day of preparation. Before the passover-sabbath they had a solemn day of preparation. This day had been ill kept by the chief priests, who called themselves the church, but was well kept by the disciples of Christ, who were branded as dangerous to the church; and it is often so. (1.) They would not put off the funeral till the sabbath day, because the sabbath is to be a day of holy rest and joy, with which the business and sorrow of a funeral do not well agree. (2.) They would not drive it too late on the day of preparation for the sabbath. What is to be done the evening before the sabbath should be so contrived that it may neither intrench upon sabbath time, nor indispose us for sabbath work.

2. Observe the convenience they took of an adjoining sepulchre; the sepulchre they made use of was *nigh at hand*. Perhaps, if they had had time, they would have carried him to Bethany, and buried him among his friends there. And I am sure he had more right to have been buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the sons of David than any of the kings of Judah had; but it was so ordered that he should be laid in a sepulchre *nigh at hand*, (1.) Because he was to lie there but awhile, as in an inn, and therefore he took the first that offered itself. (2.) Because this was a new sepulchre. Those that prepared it little thought who should handseil it; but the wisdom of God has reaches infinitely beyond ours, and he makes what use he pleases of us and all we have. (3.) We are hereby taught not to be over-curious in the place of our burial. Where the tree falls, why should it not lie? For Christ was buried in the sepulchre that was next at hand. It was faith in the promise of Canaan that directed the Patriarchs' desires to be carried thither for a burying-place; but now, since that promise is superseded by a better, that care is over.

Thus without pomp or solemnity is the body of Jesus laid in the cold and silent grave. Here lies our surety under arrest for our debts, so that if he be released his discharge will be ours. Here is the Sun of righteousness set for awhile, to rise again in greater glory, and set no more. Here lies a seeming captive to death, but a real conqueror over death; for here lies death itself slain, and the grave conquered. *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory.*

#### CHAP. XX.

This evangelist, though he began not his gospel as the rest did, yet concludes it as they did, with the history of Christ's resurrection; not of the thing itself, for none of them describe how he rose, but of the proofs and evidences of it, which demonstrated that he was risen. The proofs of Christ's resurrection, which we have in this chapter, are, 1. Such as occurred immediately at the sepulchre. 1. The sepulchre found empty, and the grave-clothes in good order, ver. 1—10. 2. Two angels appearing to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, ver. 11—13. 3. Christ himself appearing to her, ver. 14—18. 11. Such as occurred afterwards at the meetings of the apostles. 1. At one, the same day at evening that Christ rose, when Thomas was absent, ver. 19—25. 2. At another, that day seven-night, when Thomas was with them, ver. 26—31. What is related here is mostly what was omitted by the other evangelists.

**T**HE first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when

it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. 2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. 3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. 4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. 5 And he stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. 6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, 7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. 8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. 9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

There was no one thing of which the apostles were more concerned to produce substantial proof than the resurrection of their Master, 1. Because it was that which he himself appealed to as the last and most cogent proof of his being the Messiah. Those that would not believe other signs were referred to this sign of the prophet Jonas. And therefore enemies were most solicitous to stifle the notice of this, because it was put on this issue, and, if he be risen, they are not only murderers, but murderers of the Messiah. 2. Because it was upon this the performance of his undertaking for our redemption and salvation did depend. If he give his life a ransom, and do not resume it, it does not appear that his giving it was accepted as a satisfaction. If he be imprisoned for our debt, and lie by it, we are undone, 1 Cor. xv. 17. 3. Because he never showed himself alive after his resurrection to all the people, Acts x. 40, 41. We should have said, "Let his ignominious death be private, and his glorious resurrection public." But God's thoughts are not as ours; and he ordered it that his death should be public before the sun, by the same token that the sun blushed and hid his face upon it. But the demonstrations of his resurrection should be reserved as a favour for his particular friends,

and by them be published to the world, that those might be blessed who have not seen, and yet have believed. The method of proof is such as gives abundant satisfaction to those who are piously disposed to receive the doctrine and law of Christ, and yet leaves room for those to object who are willingly ignorant and obstinate in their unbelief. And this is a fair trial, suited to the case of those who are probationers.

In these verses we have the first step towards the proof of Christ's resurrection, which is, that the sepulchre was found empty. *He is not here*, and, if so, they must tell us where he is, or we conclude him risen.

1. Mary Magdalene, coming to the sepulchre, finds the *stone taken away*. This evangelist does not mention the other women that went with Mary Magdalene, but her only, because she was the most active and forward in this visit to the sepulchre, and in her appeared the most affection; and it was an affection kindled by a good cause, in consideration of the great things Christ had done for her. Much was forgiven her, therefore she loved much. She had shown her affection to him while he lived, attended his doctrine, ministered to him of her substance, Luke viii. 2, 3. It does not appear that she had any business now at Jerusalem, but to wait upon him, for the women were not bound to go up to the feast, and probably she and others followed him the closer, as Elisha did Elijah, now that they knew their Master would shortly be *taken from their head*, 2 Kings ii. 1—6. The continued instances of her respect to him at and after his death prove the sincerity of her love. Note, Love to Christ, if it be cordial, will be constant. Her love to Christ was *strong as death*, the death of the cross, for it stood by that; *cruel as the grave*, for it made a visit to that, and was not deterred by its terrors.

1. She *came to the sepulchre*, to wash the dead body with her tears, for she *went to the grave, to weep there, and to anoint it with the ointment* she had prepared. The grave is a house that people do not care for making visits to. They that are *free among the dead* are *separated from the living*; and it must be an extraordinary affection to the person which will endear his grave to us. It is especially frightful to the weak and timorous sex. Could she, that had not strength enough to *roll away the stone*, pretend to such a presence of mind as to enter the grave? The Jews' religion forbade them to meddle any more than needs must with graves and dead bodies. In visiting Christ's sepulchre she exposed herself, and perhaps the disciples, to the suspicion of a design to *steal him away*; and what real service could she do him by it? But her love answers these, and a thousand such objections. Note, (1.) We must study to do honour to Christ in those things wherein yet we cannot be profitable to him. (2.) Love to Christ will



take off the terror of death and the grave. If we cannot come to Christ but through that darksome valley, even in that, if we love him, we shall *fear no evil*.

2. She came as soon as she could, for she came, (1.) Upon the *first day of the week*, as soon as ever the sabbath was gone, longing, not to *sell corn* and to *set forth wheat* (as Amos viii. 5), but to be at the sepulchre. Those that love Christ will take the first opportunity of testifying their respect to him. This was the first Christian sabbath, and she begins it accordingly with enquiries after Christ. She had spent the day before in commemorating the work of creation, and therefore rested; but now she is upon search into the work of redemption, and therefore makes a visit to Christ and him crucified. (2.) She came *early, while it was yet dark*; so early did she set out. Note, Those who would seek Christ so as to find him must seek him early; that is, [1.] Seek him solicitously, with such a care as even breaks the sleep; be up early for fear of missing him. [2.] Seek him industriously; we must deny ourselves and our own repose in pursuit of Christ. [3.] Seek him betimes, early in our days, early every day. *My voice shall thou hear in the morning*. That day is in a fair way to be well ended that is thus begun. Those that diligently enquire after Christ *while it is yet dark* shall have such light given them concerning him as shall shine *more and more*.

3. She found the stone taken away, which she had seen *rolled to the door of the sepulchre*. Now this was, (1.) A surprise to her, for she little expected it. Christ crucified is the fountain of life. His grave is one of the wells of salvation; if we come to it in faith, though to a carnal heart it be a spring shut up, we shall find the stone rolled away (as Gen. xxix. 10) and free access to the comforts of it. Surprising comforts are the frequent encouragements of early seekers. (2.) It was the beginning of a glorious discovery; the Lord was risen, though she did not at first apprehend it so. Note, [1.] Those that are most constant in their adherence to Christ, and most diligent in their enquiries after him, have commonly the first and sweetest notices of the divine grace. Mary Magdalene, who followed Christ to the last in his humiliation, met him with the first in his exaltation. [2.] God ordinarily reveals himself and his comforts to us by degrees; to raise our expectations and quicken our enquiries.

II. Finding the stone taken away, she hastens back to Peter and John, who probably lodged together at that end of the town, not far off, and acquaints them with it: "*They have taken the Lord out of the sepulchre, envying him the honour of such a decent burying-place, and we know not where they have laid him, nor where to find him, that we may pay him the remainder of our*

*last respects.*" Observe here, 1. What a notion Mary had of the thing as it now appeared; she found the stone gone, looked into the grave, and saw it empty. Now one would expect that the first thought that offered itself would have been, Surely the Lord is risen; for whenever he had told them that he should be crucified, which she had now lately seen accomplished, he still subjoined in the same breath that *the third day he should rise again*. Could she feel the great earthquake that happened as she was coming to the sepulchre, or getting ready to come, and now see the grave empty, and yet have no thought of the resurrection enter into her mind? what, no conjecture, no suspicion of it? So it seems by the odd construction she puts upon the removing of the stone, which was very far fetched. Note, When we come to reflect upon our own conduct in a *cloudy and dark day*, we shall stand amazed at our dulness and forgetfulness, that we could miss of such thoughts as afterwards appear obvious, and how they could be so far out of the way when we had occasion for them. She suggested, *They have taken away the Lord*; either the chief priests have taken him away, to put him in a worse place, or Joseph and Nicodemus have, upon second thoughts, taken him away, to avoid the ill-will of the Jews. Whatever was her suspicion, it seems it was a great vexation and disturbance to her that the body was gone; whereas, if she had understood it rightly, nothing could be more happy. Note, Weak believers often make that the matter of their complaint which is really just ground of hope, and matter of joy. We cry out that this and the other creature-comfort are taken away, and we know not how to retrieve them, when indeed the removal of our temporal comforts, which we lament, is in order to the resurrection of our spiritual comforts, which we should rejoice in too. 2. What a narrative she made of it to Peter and John. She did not stand poring upon the grief herself, but acquaints her friends with it. Note, The communication of sorrows is one good improvement of the communion of saints. Observe, Peter, though he had denied his Master, had not deserted his Master's friends; by this appears the sincerity of his repentance, that he associated with the disciple whom Jesus loved. And the disciples' keeping up their intimacy with him as formerly, notwithstanding his fall, teaches us to restore those with a spirit of meekness that have been faulty. If God has received them upon their repentance, why should not we?

III. Peter and John go with all speed to the sepulchre, to satisfy themselves of the truth of what was told them, and to see if they could make any further discoveries, v. 3, 4. Some think that the other disciples were with Peter and John when the news came; for they *told these things to the eleven*,



Luke xxiv. 9. Others think that Mary Magdalene told her story only to Peter and John, and that the other women told theirs to the other disciples; yet none of them went to the sepulchre but Peter and John, who were two of the first three of Christ's disciples, often distinguished from the rest by special favours. Note, It is well when those that are more honoured than others with the privileges of disciples are more active than others in the duty of disciples, more willing to take pains and run hazards in a good work. 1. See here what use we should make of the experience and observations of others. When Mary told them what she had seen, they would not in this sense take her word, but would go and see with their own eyes. Do others tell us of the comfort and benefit of ordinances? Let us be engaged thereby to make trial of them. Come and see how good it is to draw near to God. 2. See how ready we should be to share with our friends in their cares and fears. Peter and John hastened to the sepulchre, that they might be able to give Mary a satisfactory answer to her jealousies. We should not grudge any pains we take for the succouring and comforting of the weak and timorous followers of Christ. 3. See what haste we should make in a good work, and when we are going on a good errand. Peter and John consulted neither their ease nor their gravity, but ran to the sepulchre, that they might show the strength of their zeal and affection, and might lose no time. If we are in the way of God's commandments, we should run in that way. 4. See what a good thing it is to have good company in a good work. Perhaps neither of these disciples would have ventured to the sepulchre alone, but, being both together, they made no difficulty of it. See Eccl. iv. 9. 5. See what a laudable emulation it is among disciples to strive which shall excel, which shall exceed, in that which is good. It was no breach of ill manners for John, though the younger, to outrun Peter, and get before him. We must do our best, and neither envy those that can do better, nor despise those that do as they can, though they come behind. (1.) He that got foremost in this race was *the disciple whom Jesus loved* in a special manner, and who therefore in a special manner loved Jesus. Note, Sense of Christ's love to us, kindling love in us to him again, will make us to excel in virtue. The love of Christ will constrain us more than any thing to abound in duty. (2.) He that was cast behind was Peter, who had denied his Master, and was in sorrow and shame for it, and this clogged him as a weight; sense of guilt cramps us, and hinders our enlargement in the service of God. When conscience is offended we lose ground.

IV. Peter and John, having come to the sepulchre, prosecute the enquiry, yet improve little in the discovery.

1. John went no further than Mary Magdalene had done. (1.) He had the curiosity to look into the sepulchre, and saw it was empty. He *stooped down*, and *looked in*. Those that would find the knowledge of Christ must stoop down, and look in, must with a humble heart submit to the authority of divine revelation, and must *look wistly*. (2.) Yet he had not courage to go into the sepulchre. The warmest affections are not always accompanied with the boldest resolutions; many are swift to run religion's race that are not stout to fight her battles.

2. Peter, though he came last, went in first, and made a more exact discovery than John had done, v. 6, 7. Though John outran him, he did not therefore turn back, nor stand still, but made after him as fast as he could; and, while John was with much caution looking in, he came, and with great courage *went into the sepulchre*.

(1.) Observe here the boldness of Peter, and how God dispenses his gifts variously. John could out-run Peter, but Peter could out-dare John. It is seldom true of the same persons, what David says poetically of Saul and Jonathan, that they were *swifter than eagles*, and yet *stronger than lions*, 2 Sam. i. 23. Some disciples are quick, and they are useful to quicken those that are slow; others are bold, and they are useful to embolden those that are timorous; *diversity of gifts, but one Spirit*. Peter's venturing into the sepulchre may teach us, [1.] That those who in good earnest seek after Christ must not frighten themselves with bugbears and foolish fancies: "There is a lion in the way, a ghost in the grave." [2.] That good Christians need not be afraid of the grave, since Christ has lain in it; for to them there is nothing in it frightful; it is not the pit of destruction, nor are the worms in it never-dying worms. Let us therefore not indulge, but conquer, the fear we are apt to conceive upon the sight of a dead body, or being alone among the graves; and, since we must be dead and in the grave shortly, let us make death and the grave familiar to us, as our near kindred, Job xvii. 14. [3.] We must be willing to go through the grave to Christ; that way he went to his glory, and so must we. If we cannot see God's face and live, better die than never see it. See Job xix. 25, &c.

(2.) Observe the posture in which he found things in the sepulchre. [1.] Christ had left his grave-clothes behind him there; what clothes he appeared in to his disciples we are not told, but he never appeared in his grave-clothes, as ghosts are supposed to do; no, he laid them aside, *First*, Because he arose to die no more; death was to have no more dominion over him, Rom. vi. 9. Lazarus came out with his grave-clothes on, for he was to use them again; but Christ, rising to an immortal life, came out free from those incumbrances. *Secondly*, Be-



cause he was going to be clothed with the robes of glory, therefore he lays aside these rags; in the heavenly paradise there will be no more occasion for clothes than there was in the earthly. The ascending prophet dropped his mantle. *Thirdly*, When we arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, we must leave our grave-clothes behind us, must put off all our corruptions. *Fourthly*, Christ left those in the grave, as it were, for our use; if the grave be a bed to the saints, thus he hath sheeted that bed, and made it ready for them; and the napkin by itself is of use for the mourning survivors to *wipe away their tears*. [2.] The grave-clothes were found in very good order, which serves for an evidence that his body was not stolen away while men slept. Robbers of tombs have been known to take away the clothes and leave the body; but none [prior to the practices of modern resurrectionists] ever took away the body and left the clothes, especially when it was fine linen and new, Mark xv. 46. Any one would rather choose to carry a dead body in its clothes than naked. Or, if those that were supposed to have stolen it would have left the grave-clothes behind, yet it cannot be supposed they should find leisure to fold up the linen.

(3.) See how Peter's boldness encouraged John; now he took heart and ventured in (v. 8), and *he saw and believed*; not barely believed what Mary said, that the body was gone (no thanks to him to believe what *he saw*), but he began to believe that Jesus was risen to life again, though his faith, as yet, was weak and wavering.

[1.] John followed Peter in venturing. It should seem, he durst not have gone into the sepulchre if Peter had not gone in first. Note, It is good to be emboldened in a good work by the boldness of others. The dread of difficulty and danger will be taken off by observing the resolution and courage of others. Perhaps John's quickness had made Peter run faster, and now Peter's boldness makes John venture further, than otherwise either the one or the other would have done; though Peter had lately fallen under the disgrace of being a deserter, and John had been advanced to the honour of a confidant (Christ having committed his mother to him), yet John not only associated with Peter, but thought it no disparagement to follow him.

[2.] Yet, it should seem, John got the start of Peter in believing. Peter saw and wondered (Luke xxiv. 12), but John saw and believed. A mind disposed to contemplation may perhaps sooner receive the evidence of divine truth than a mind disposed to action. But what was the reason that they were so slow of heart to believe? The evangelist tells us (v. 9), as yet they *knew not the scripture*, that is, they did not consider, and apply, and duly improve, what they knew of the scripture, that he must *rise again from*

*the dead*. The Old Testament spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah; they believed him to be the Messiah; he himself had often told them that, according to the scriptures of the Old Testament, he should rise again; but they had not presence of mind sufficient by these to explain the present appearances. Observe here, *First*, How unapt the disciples themselves were, at first, to believe the resurrection of Christ, which confirms the testimony they afterwards gave with so much assurance concerning it; for, by their backwardness to believe it, it appears that they were not credulous concerning it, nor of those simple ones that believe every word. If they had had any design to advance their own interest by it, they would greedily have caught at the first spark of its evidence, would have raised and supported one another's expectations of it, and have prepared the minds of those that followed them to receive the notices of it; but we find, on the contrary, that their hopes were frustrated, it was to them as a strange thing, and one of the furthest things from their thoughts. Peter and John were so shy of believing it at first that nothing less than the most convincing proof the thing was capable of could bring them to testify it afterwards with so much assurance. Hereby it appears that they were not only honest men, who would not deceive others, but cautious men, who would not themselves be imposed upon. *Secondly*, What was the reason of their slowness to believe; because as yet they *knew not the scripture*. This seems to be the evangelist's acknowledgment of his own fault among the rest; he does not say, "For as yet Jesus had not appeared to them, had not shown them his hands and his side," but, "As yet he had not *opened their understandings to understand the scripture* (Luke xxiv. 44, 45), for that is the *most sure word of prophecy*."

3. Peter and John pursued their enquiry no further, but desisted, hovering between faith and unbelief (v. 10): *The disciples went away, not much the wiser, to their own home, πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς—to their own friends and companions*, the rest of the disciples to their own lodgings, for homes they had none at Jerusalem. They went away, (1.) For fear of being taken up upon suspicion of a design to steal away the body, or of being charged with it now that it was gone. Instead of improving their faith, their care is to secure themselves, to shift for their own safety. In difficult dangerous times it is hard even for good men to go on in their work with the resolution that becomes them. (2.) Because they were at a loss, and knew not what to do next, nor what to make of what they had seen; and therefore, not having courage to stay at the grave, they resolve to go home, and wait till God shall *reveal even this unto them*, which is an instance of their weakness as yet. (3.) It is probable that the

rest of the disciples were together; to them they return, to make report of what they had discovered, and to consult with them what was to be done; and, probably, now they appointed their meeting in the evening, when Christ came to them. It is observable that before Peter and John came to the sepulchre an angel had appeared there, rolled away the stone, frightened the guard, and comforted the women; as soon as they were gone from the sepulchre, Mary Magdalene here sees two angels in the sepulchre (v. 12), and yet Peter and John come to the sepulchre, and go into it, and see none. What shall we make of this? Where were the angels when Peter and John were at the sepulchre, who appeared there before and after? [1.] Angels appear and disappear at pleasure, according to the orders and instructions given them. They may be, and are really, where they are not visibly; nay, it should seem, may be visible to one and not to another, at the same time, Num. xxii. 23; 2 Kings vi. 17. How they make themselves visible, then invisible, and then visible again, it is presumption for us to enquire; but that they do so is plain from this story. [2.] This favour was shown to those who were early and constant in their enquiries after Christ, and was the reward of those that came first and staid last, but denied to those that made a transient visit. [3.] The apostles were not to receive their instructions from the angels, but from the Spirit of grace. See Heb. ii. 5.

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, 12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. 14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. 17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my

Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

St. Mark tells us that Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene (Mark xvi. 9); that appearance is here largely related; and we may observe,

I. The constancy and fervency of Mary Magdalene's affection to the Lord Jesus, v. 11.

1. She staid at the sepulchre, when Peter and John were gone, because there her Master had lain, and there she was likeliest to hear some tidings of him. Note, (1.) Where there is a true love to Christ there will be a constant adherence to him, and a resolution with purpose of heart to cleave to him. This good woman, though she has lost him, yet, rather than seem to desert him, will abide by his grave for his sake, and continue in his love even when she wants the comfort of it. (2.) Where there is a true desire of acquaintance with Christ there will be a constant attendance on the means of knowledge. See Hos. vi. 2, 3, *The third day he will raise us up*; and then shall we know the meaning of that resurrection, if we follow on to know, as Mary here.

2. She staid there weeping, and these tears loudly bespoke her affection to her Master. Those that have lost Christ have cause to weep; she wept at the remembrance of his bitter sufferings; wept for his death, and the loss which she and her friends and the country sustained by it; wept to think of returning home without him; wept because she did not now find his body. Those that seek Christ must *seek him sorrowing* (Luke ii. 48), must weep, not for him, but for themselves.

3. *As she wept, she looked into the sepulchre*, that her eye might affect her heart. When we are in search of something that we have lost we look again and again in the place where we last left it, and expected to have found it. She will look *yet seven times*, not knowing but that at length she may see some encouragement. Note, (1.) Weeping must not hinder seeking. Though she wept, she *stooped down and looked in*. (2.) Those are likely to seek and find that seek with affection, that seek in tears.

II. The vision she had of two angels in the sepulchre, v. 12. Observe here,

1. The description of the persons she saw. They were *two angels in white, sitting* (probably on some benches or ledges hewn out in the rock) one at the *head*, and the other at the *feet*, of the grave. Here we have,

(1.) Their nature. They were angels, messengers from heaven, sent on purpose, on this great occasion, [1.] To honour the Son,



and to grace the solemnity of his resurrection. Now that the Son of God was again to be brought into the world, the angels have a charge to attend him, as they did at his birth, Heb. i. 6. [2.] To comfort the saints; to speak good words to those that were in sorrow, and, by giving them notice that the Lord was risen, to prepare them for the sight of him.

(2.) Their number: *two*, not a *multitude of the heavenly host*, to sing praise, only two, to bear witness; for out of the mouth of two witnesses this word would be established.

(3.) Their array: They were *in white*, denoting, [1.] Their purity and holiness. The best of men *standing before the angels*, and compared with them, *are clothed in filthy garments* (Zech. iii. 3), but angels are spotless; and glorified saints, when they come to be as the angels, shall *walk with Christ in white*. [2.] Their glory, and glorying, upon this occasion. The white in which they appeared represented the brightness of that state into which Christ was now risen.

(4.) Their posture and place: They sat, as it were, reposing themselves in Christ's grave; for angels, though they needed not a restoration, were obliged to Christ for their establishment. These angels went into the grave, to teach us not to be afraid of it, nor to think that our resting in it awhile will be any prejudice to our immortality; no, matters are so ordered that the grave is not much out of our way to heaven. It intimates likewise that angels are to be employed about the saints, not only at their death, to carry their souls into Abraham's bosom, but at the great day, *to raise their bodies*, Matt. xxiv. 31. These angelic guards (and angels are called *watchers*, Dan. iv. 23), keeping possession of the sepulchre, when they had frightened away the guards which the enemies had set, represents Christ's victory over the powers of darkness, routing and defeating them. Thus Michael and his angels are more than conquerors. Their sitting to face one another, one at his bed's head, the other at his bed's feet, denotes their care of the entire body of Christ, his mystical as well as his natural body, from head to foot; it may also remind us of the two cherubim, placed one at either end of the mercy-seat, looking one at another, Exod. xxv. 18. Christ crucified was the great propitiatory, at the head and feet of which were these two cherubim, not with flaming swords, to keep us from, but welcome messengers, to direct us to, the way of life.

2. Their compassionate enquiry into the cause of Mary Magdalene's grief (v. 13): *Woman, why weepest thou?* This question was, (1.) A rebuke to her weeping: "*Why weepest thou*, when thou hast cause to rejoice?" Many of the floods of our tears would *dry away* before such a search as this into the fountain of them. *Why art thou cast down?* (2.) It was designed to show

how much angels are concerned at the griefs of the saints, having a charge to minister to them for their comfort. Christians should thus sympathize with one another. (3.) It was only to make an occasion of informing her of that which would turn her mourning into rejoicing, would *put off her sackcloth, and gird her with gladness*.

3. The melancholy account she gives them of her present distress: *Because they have taken away the blessed body I came to embalm, and I know not where they have laid it*. The same story she had told, v. 2. In it we may see, (1.) The weakness of her faith. If she had had faith as a *grain of mustard-seed*, this mountain would have been removed; but we often perplex ourselves needlessly with imaginary difficulties, which faith would discover to us as real advantages. Many good people complain of the clouds and darkness they are under, which are the necessary methods of grace for the humbling of their souls, the mortifying of their sins, and the endearing of Christ to them. (2.) The strength of her love. Those that have a true affection for Christ cannot but be in great affliction when they have lost either the comfortable tokens of his love in their souls or the comfortable opportunities of conversing with him, and doing him honour, in his ordinances. Mary Magdalene is not diverted from her enquiries by the surprise of the vision, nor satisfied with the honour of it; but still she harps upon the same string: *They have taken away my Lord*. A sight of angels and their smiles will not suffice without a sight of Christ and God's smiles in him. Nay, the sight of angels is but an opportunity of pursuing her enquiries after Christ. All creatures, the most excellent, the most dear, should be used as means, and but as means, to bring us into acquaintance with God in Christ. The angels asked her, *Why weepest thou?* I have cause enough to weep, says she, *for they have taken away my Lord*, and, like Micah, *What have I more?* Do you ask, *Why I weep?* *My beloved has withdrawn himself, and is gone*. Note, None know, but those who have experienced it, the sorrow of a deserted soul, that has had comfortable evidences of the love of God in Christ, and hopes of heaven; but has now lost them, and walks in darkness; such a *wounded spirit who can bear?*

III. Christ's appearing to her while she was talking with the angels, and telling them her case. Before they had given her any answer, Christ himself steps in, to satisfy her enquiries, for God now speaketh to us by his Son; none but he himself can direct us to himself. Mary would fain know where her Lord is, and behold he is at her right hand. Note, 1. Those that will be content with nothing short of a sight of Christ shall be put off with nothing less. He never said to the soul that sought him, *Seek in vain*. "Is it Christ that thou wouldst have? Christ thou

shalt have." 2. Christ, in manifesting himself to those that seek him, often outdoes their expectations. Mary longs to see the dead body of Christ, and complains of the loss of that, and behold she sees him alive. Thus he does for his praying people more than they are able to ask or think. In this appearance of Christ to Mary observe,

(1.) How he did at first conceal himself from her.

[1.] He stood as a common person, and she looked upon him accordingly, *v. 14*. She stood expecting an answer to her complaint from the angels; and either seeing the shadow, or hearing the tread, of some person behind her, she *turned herself back* from talking with the angels, and *sees Jesus himself* standing, the very person she was looking for, and yet she *knew not that it was Jesus*. Note, *First, The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart* (Ps. xxxiv. 18), nearer than they are aware. Those that seek Christ, though they do not see him, may yet be sure he is not far from them. *Secondly*, Those that diligently seek the Lord will turn every way in their enquiry after him. *Mary turned herself back*, in hopes of some discoveries. Several of the ancients suggest that Mary was directed to look behind her by the angels' rising up, and doing their obeisance to the Lord Jesus, whom they saw before Mary did; and that she looked back to see to whom it was they paid such a profound reverence. But, if so, it is not likely that she would have taken him for the gardener; rather, therefore, it was her earnest desire in seeking that made her turn every way. *Thirdly*, Christ is often near his people, and they are not aware of him. She *knew not that it was Jesus*; not that he appeared in any other likeness, but either it was a careless transient look she cast upon him, and, her eyes being full of care, she could not so well distinguish, or *they were holden, that she should not know him*, as those of the two disciples, Luke xxiv. 16.

[2.] He asked her a common question, and she answered him accordingly, *v. 15*.

*First*, The question he asked her was natural enough, and what any one would have asked her: "*Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?*" What business hast thou here in the garden so early? And what is all this noise and ado for?" Perhaps it was spoken with some roughness, as Joseph spoke to his brethren when he made himself strange, before he made himself known to them. It should seem, this was the first word Christ spoke after his resurrection: "*Why weepest thou? I am risen.*" The resurrection of Christ has enough in it to allay all our sorrows, to check the streams, and dry up the fountains, of our tears. Observe here, Christ takes cognizance, 1. Of his people's griefs, and enquires, *Why weepest thou?* He bottles their tears, and records them in his book. 2. Of his people's cares,

and enquires, *Whom seek you, and what would you have?* When he knows they are seeking him, yet he will know it from them; they must tell him whom they seek.

*Secondly*, The reply she made him is natural enough; she does not give him a direct answer, but, as if she should say, "*Why do you banter me, and upbraid me with my tears? You know why I weep, and whom I seek;*" and therefore, *supposing him to be the gardener*, the person employed by Joseph to dress and keep his garden, who, she thought, was come thither thus early to his work, she said, *Sir, if thou hast carried him hence, pray tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away*. See here, 1. The error of her understanding. She supposed our Lord Jesus to be the gardener, perhaps because he asked what authority she had to be there. Note, Troubled spirits, in a cloudy and dark day, are apt to misrepresent Christ to themselves, and to put wrong constructions upon the methods of his providence and grace. 2. The truth of her affection. See how her heart was set upon finding Christ. She puts the question to every one she meets, like the careful spouse, *Saw you him whom my soul loveth?* She speaks respectfully to a gardener, and calls him *Sir*, in hopes to gain some intelligence from him concerning her beloved. When she speaks of Christ, she does not name him; but, *If thou have borne him hence*, taking it for granted that this gardener was full of thoughts concerning this Jesus as well as she, and therefore could not but know whom she meant. Another evidence of the strength of her affection was that, wherever he was laid, she would undertake to remove him. Such a body, with such a weight of spices about it, was much more than she could pretend to carry; but true love thinks it can do more than it can, and makes nothing of difficulties. She supposed this gardener grudged that the body of one that was ignominiously crucified should have the honour to be laid in his master's new tomb, and that therefore he had removed it to some sorry place, which he thought fitter for it. Yet Mary does not threaten to tell his master, and get him turned out of his place for it; but undertakes to find out some other sepulchre, to which he might be welcome. Christ needs not to stay where he is thought a burden.

(2.) How Christ at length made himself known to her, and, by a pleasing surprise, gave her infallible assurances of his resurrection. Joseph at length said to his brethren, *I am Joseph*. So Christ here to Mary Magdalene, now that he is entered upon his exalted state. Observe,

[1.] How Christ discovered himself to this good woman that was seeking him in tears (*v. 16*): *Jesus saith unto her, Mary*. It was said with an emphasis, and that air of kindness and freedom with which he was wont to speak to her. Now he changed his voice, and



spoke like himself, not like the gardener. Christ's way of making himself known to his people is by his word, his word applied to their souls, speaking to them in particular. When those whom God *knew by name* in the counsels of his love (Exod. xxxiii. 12) are called *by name* in the efficacy of his grace, then *he reveals his Son in them*, as in Paul (Gal. i. 16), when Christ called to him by name, *Saul, Saul*. Christ's *sheep know his voice*, ch. x. 4. This one word, *Mary*, was like that to the disciples in the storm, *It is I*. Then the word of Christ does us good when we put our names into the precepts and promises. "In this Christ calls to me, and speaks to me."

[2.] How readily she received this discovery. When Christ said, "Mary, dost thou not know me? are you and I grown such strangers?" she was presently aware who it was, as the spouse (Cant. ii. 8), *It is the voice of my beloved*. She turned herself, and said, *Rabboni, My Master*. It might properly be read with an interrogation, "*Rabboni? Is it my master?*" Nay, but is it indeed?" Observe, *First*, The title of respect she gives him: *My Master*; ῥαββί—*a teaching master*. The Jews called their doctors *Rabbies*, great men. Their critics tell us that *Rabbon* was with them a more honourable title than *Rabbi*; and therefore Mary chooses that, and adds a note of appropriation, *My great Master*. Note, Notwithstanding the freedom of communion which Christ is pleased to admit us to with himself, we must remember that he is our *Master*, and to be approached with a *godly fear*. *Secondly*, With what liveliness of affection she gives this title to Christ. *She turned from the angels*, whom she had in her eye, to look unto Jesus. We must take off our regards from all creatures, even the brightest and best, to fix them upon Christ, from whom nothing must divert us, and with whom nothing must interfere. *When she thought it had been the gardener*, she looked another way while speaking to him; but now that she knew the voice of Christ *she turned herself*. The soul that hears Christ's voice, and is turned to him, calls him, with joy and triumph, *My Master*. See with what pleasure those who love Christ speak of his authority over them. *My Master, my great Master*.

[3.] The further instructions that Christ gave her (v. 17): "*Touch me not*, but go and carry the news to the disciples."

*First*, He diverts her from the expectation of familiar society and conversation with him at this time: *Touch me not*, for *I am not yet ascended*. Mary was so transported with the sight of her dear Master that she forgot herself, and that state of glory into which he was now entering, and was ready to express her joy by affectionate embraces of him, which Christ here forbids at this time. 1. *Touch me not* thus at all, for *I am to ascend to heaven*. He bade the disciples touch him, for the confirmation of their faith; he allowed

the women to take hold of his feet, and worship him (Matt. xxviii. 9); but Mary, supposing that he was risen, as Lazarus was, to live among them constantly, and converse with them freely as he had done, upon that presumption was about to take hold of his hand with her usual freedom. This mistake Christ rectified; she must believe him, and adore him, as exalted, but must not expect to be familiar with him as formerly. See 2 Cor. v. 16. He forbids her to dote upon his bodily presence, to set her heart on this, or expect its continuance, and leads her to the spiritual converse and communion which she should have with him after he was ascended to his Father; for the greatest joy of his resurrection was that it was a step towards his ascension. Mary thought, now that her Master was risen, he would presently set up a temporal kingdom, such as they had long promised themselves. "No," says Christ, "touch me not, with any such thought; think not to lay hold on me, so as to detain me here; for, though *I am not yet ascended*, go to my brethren, and tell them, *I am to ascend*." As before his death, so now after his resurrection, he still harps upon this, that he was going away, was *no more in the world*; and therefore they must look higher than his bodily presence, and look further than the present state of things. 2. "*Touch me not*, do not stay to touch me now, stay not now to make any further enquiries, or give any further expressions of joy, for *I am not yet ascended*, I shall not depart immediately, it may as well be done another time; the best service thou canst do now is to carry the tidings to the disciples; lose no time therefore, but go away with all speed." Note, Public service ought to be preferred before private satisfaction. *It is more blessed to give than to receive*. Jacob must let an angel go, when the day breaks, and it is time for him to look after his family. Mary must not stay to talk with her Master, but must carry his message; for it is a day of good tidings, which she must not engross the comfort of, but hand it to others. See that story, 2 Kings vii. 9.

*Secondly*, He directs her what message to carry to his disciples: *But go to my brethren, and tell them*, not only that *I am risen* (she could have told them that of herself, for she had seen him), but that *I ascend*. Observe,

a. To whom this message is sent: *Go to my brethren* with it; for he is not ashamed to call them so. (a.) He was now entering upon his glory, and was declared to be the *Son of God with greater power than ever*, yet he owns his disciples as his brethren, and expresses himself with more tender affection to them than before; he had called them friends, but never brethren till now. Though Christ be high, yet he is not haughty. Notwithstanding his elevation, he disdains not to own his poor relations. (b.) His disciples had lately carried themselves very disingenu-

ously towards him; he had never seen them together since *they all forsook him and fled*, when he was apprehended; justly might he now have sent them an angry message: "Go to yonder treacherous deserters, and tell them, I will never trust them any more, or have any thing more to do with them." No, he forgives, he forgets, and does not upbraid.

b. By whom it is sent: by *Mary Magdalene, out of whom had been cast seven devils*, yet now thus favoured. This was her reward for her constancy in adhering to Christ, and enquiring after him; and a tacit rebuke to the apostles, who had not been so close as she was in attending on the dying Jesus, nor so early as she was in meeting the rising Jesus; she becomes an apostle to the apostles.

c. What the message itself is: *I ascend to my Father*. Two full breasts of consolation are here in these words:—

(a.) Our joint-relation to God, resulting from our union with Christ, is an unspeakable comfort. Speaking of that inexhaustible spring of light, life, and bliss, he says, *He is my Father, and your Father; my God, and your God*. This is very expressive of the near relation that subsists between Christ and believers: *he that sanctifieth, and those that are sanctified, are both one; for they agree in one*, Heb. ii. 11. Here we have such an advancement of Christians, and such a condescension of Christ, as bring them very near together, so admirably well is the matter contrived, in order to their union. [a.] It is the great dignity of believers that *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* is, in him, *their Father*. A vast difference indeed there is between the respective foundations of the relation; he is Christ's Father by eternal generation, ours by a gracious adoption; yet even this warrants us to call him, as Christ did, *Abba, Father*. This gives a reason why Christ called them brethren, because his Father was their Father. Christ was now ascending to appear as an *advocate with the Father*—with *his Father*, and therefore we may hope he will prevail for any thing—with *our Father*, and therefore we may hope he will prevail for us. [b.] It is the great condescension of Christ that he is pleased to own the believer's God for his God: *My God, and your God*; mine, that he may be yours; the God of the Redeemer, to support him (Ps. lxxxix. 26), that he might be the God of the redeemed, to save them. The summary of the new covenant is that *God will be to us a God*; and therefore Christ being the surety and head of the covenant, who is primarily dealt with, and believers only through him as his spiritual seed, this covenant-relation fastens first upon him, God becomes his God, and so ours; we partaking of a divine nature, Christ's Father is our Father; and, he partaking of the human nature, our God is his God.

(b.) Christ's ascension into heaven, in further prosecution of his undertaking for us,

is likewise an unspeakable comfort: "Tell them I must shortly ascend; that is the next step I am to take." Now this was intended to be, [a.] A word of caution to these disciples, not to expect the continuance of his bodily presence on earth, nor the setting up of his temporal kingdom among men, which they dreamed of. "No, tell them, I am risen, not to stay with them, but to go on their errand to heaven." Thus those who are raised to a spiritual life, in conformity to Christ's resurrection, must reckon that they rise to ascend; *they are quickened with Christ that they may sit with him in heavenly places*, Eph. ii. 5, 6. Let them not think that this earth is to be their home and rest; no, being born from heaven, they are bound for heaven; their eye and aim must be upon another world, and this must be ever upon their hearts, I ascend, therefore must I seek things above.

[b.] A word of comfort to them, and to all that shall believe in him through their word; he was then ascending, he is now *ascended to his Father, and our Father*. This was his advancement; he ascended to receive those honours and powers which were to be the recompence of his humiliation; he says it with triumph, that those who love him may rejoice. This is our advantage; for he ascended as a conqueror, *leading captivity captive* for us (Ps. lxxviii. 18), he ascended as our forerunner, *to prepare a place for us*, and to be ready to receive us. This message was like that which Joseph's brethren brought to Jacob concerning him (Gen. xlv. 26), *Joseph is yet alive*, and not only so, *vivit imo, et in senatum venit—he lives, and comes into the senate too; he is governor over all the land of Egypt*; all power is his.

Some make those words, *I ascend to my God and your God*, to include a promise of our resurrection, in the virtue of Christ's resurrection; for Christ had proved the resurrection of the dead from these words, *I am the God of Abraham*, Matt. xxii. 32. So that Christ here insinuates, "As he is my God, and hath therefore raised me, so he is your God, and will therefore raise you, and be your God, Rev. xxi. 3. *Because I live, you shall live also*. I now ascend, to honour my God, and you shall ascend to him as your God.

IV. Here is Mary Magdalene's faithful report of what she had seen and heard to the disciples (v. 18): *She came and told the disciples, whom she found together, that she had seen the Lord*. Peter and John had left her seeking him carefully with tears, and would not stay to seek him with her; and now she comes to tell them that she had found him, and to rectify the mistake she had led them into by enquiring after the dead body, for now she found it was a living body and a glorified one; so that she found what she sought, and, what was infinitely better, she had joy in her sight of the Master herself, and was willing to communicate of her joy,



for she knew it would be good news to them. When God comforts us, it is with this design, that we may comfort others. And as she told them what she had seen, so also what she had heard; she had seen the Lord alive, of which this was a token (and a good token it was) *that he had spoken these things unto her* as a message to be delivered to them, and she delivered it faithfully. Those that are acquainted with the word of Christ themselves should communicate their knowledge for the good of others, and not grudge that others should know as much as they do.

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. 20 And when he had so said, he showed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. 21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: 23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained. 24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

The infallible proof of Christ's resurrection was his *showing himself alive*, Acts i. 3. In these verses, we have an account of his first appearance to the college of the disciples, on the day on which he rose. He had sent them the tidings of his resurrection by trusty and credible messengers; but to show his love to them, and confirm their faith in him, he came himself, and gave them all the assurances they could desire of the truth of it, that they might not have it by hearsay only, and at second hand, but might themselves be eye-witnesses of his being alive, because they must attest it to the world, and build the church upon that testimony. Now observe

I. When and where this appearance was, *v.* 19. It was the same day that he rose, *being*

*the first day of the week*, the day after the Jewish sabbath, at a private meeting of the disciples, ten of them, and some more of their friends with them, Luke xxiv. 33.

There are three secondary ordinances (as I may call them) instituted by our Lord Jesus, to continue in his church, for the support of it, and for the due administration of the principal ordinances—the word, sacraments, and prayer; these are, the Lord's day, solemn assemblies, and a standing ministry. The mind of Christ concerning each of these is plainly intimated to us in these verses: of the first two, here, in the circumstances of this appearance, the other *v.* 21. Christ's kingdom was to be set up among men, immediately upon his resurrection; and accordingly we find the very day he arose, though but a day of small things, yet graced with those solemnities which should help to keep up a face of religion throughout all the ages of the church.

1. Here is a Christian sabbath observed by the disciples, and owned by our Lord Jesus. The visit Christ made to his disciples was on *the first day of the week*. And the first day of the week is (I think) the only day of the week, or month, or year, that is ever mentioned by number in all the New Testament; and this is several times spoken of as a day religiously observed. Though it was said here expressly (*v.* 1) that Christ arose on *the first day of the week*, and it might have been sufficient to say here (*v.* 19), he appeared the same day at evening; yet, to put an honour upon the day, it is repeated, *being the first day of the week*; not that the apostles designed to put honour upon the day (they were yet in doubt concerning the occasion of it), but God designed to put honour upon it, by ordering it that they should be altogether, to receive Christ's first visit on that day. Thus, in effect, he blessed and sanctified that day, because in it the Redeemer rested.

2. Here is a Christian assembly solemnized by the disciples, and also owned by the Lord Jesus. Probably the disciples met here for some religious exercise, to pray together; or, perhaps, they met to compare notes, and consider whether they had sufficient evidence of their Master's resurrection, and to consult what was now to be done, whether they should keep together or scatter; they met to know one another's minds, strengthen one another's hands, and concert proper measures to be taken in the present critical juncture. This meeting was private, because they durst not appear publicly, especially in a body. They met in a house, but they kept the door shut, that they might not be seen together, and that none might come among them but such as they knew; for they feared the Jews, who would prosecute the disciples as criminals, that they might seem to believe the lie they would deceive the world with, that his

disciples came by night, and stole him away. Note, (1.) The disciples of Christ, even in difficult times, must not forsake the assembling of themselves together, Heb. x. 25. Those sheep of the flock were scattered in the storm; but sheep are sociable, and will come together again. It is no new thing for the assemblies of Christ's disciples to be driven into corners, and forced into the wilderness, Rev. xii. 14; Prov. xxviii. 12. (2.) God's people have been often obliged to enter into their chambers, and shut their doors, as here, for fear of the Jews. Persecution is allotted them, and retirement from persecution is allowed them; and then where shall we look for them but in dens and caves of the earth. It is a real grief, but no real reproach, of Christ's disciples, thus to abscond.

II. What was said and done in this visit Christ made to his disciples, and his interview between them. When they were assembled, Jesus came among them, in his own likeness, yet drawing a veil over the brightness of his body, now begun to be glorified, else it would have dazzled their eyes, as in this transfiguration. Christ came among them, to give them a specimen of the performance of his promise, that, where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them. He came, though the doors were shut. This does not at all weaken the evidence of his having a real human body after his resurrection; though the doors were shut, he knew how to open them without any noise, and come in so that they might not hear him, as formerly he had walked on the water, and yet had a true body. It is a comfort to Christ's disciples, when their solemn assemblies are reduced to privacy, that no doors can shut out Christ's presence from them. We have five things in this appearance of Christ:—

(1.) His kind and familiar salutation of his disciples: *He said, Peace be unto you.* This was not a word of course, though commonly used so at the meeting of friends, but a solemn, uncommon benediction, conferring upon them all the blessed fruits and effects of his death and resurrection. The phrase was common, but the sense was now peculiar. *Peace be unto you* is as much as, All good be to you, all peace always by all means. Christ had left them his peace for their legacy, ch. xiv. 27. By the death of the testator the testament was become of force, and he was now risen from the dead, to prove the will, and to be himself the executor of it. Accordingly, he here makes prompt payment of the legacy: *Peace be unto you.* His speaking peace makes peace, creates the fruit of the lips, peace; peace with God, peace in your own consciences, peace with one another; all this peace be with you; not peace with the world, but peace in Christ. His sudden appearing in the midst of them, when they were full of doubts concerning him, full of fears concerning themselves, could not but put them

into some disorder and consternation, the noise of which waves he stills with this word, *Peace be unto you.*

(2.) His clear and undeniable manifestation of himself to them, v. 20. And here observe,

[1.] The method he took to convince them of the truth of his resurrection. They now saw him alive whom multitudes had seen dead two or three days before. Now the only doubt was whether this that they saw alive was the same individual body that had been seen dead; and none could desire a further proof that it was so than the scars or marks of the wounds in the body. Now, *First*, The marks of the wounds, and very deep marks (though without any pain or soreness), remained in the body of the Lord Jesus even after his resurrection, that they might be demonstrations of the truth of it. Conquerors glory in the marks of their wounds. Christ's wounds were to speak on earth that it was he himself, and therefore he arose with them; they were to speak in heaven, in the intercession he must ever live to make, and therefore he ascended with them, and appeared in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain, and bleeding afresh, Rev. v. 6. Nay, it should seem, he will come again with his scars, that they may look on him whom they pierced. *Secondly*, These marks he showed to his disciples, for their conviction. They had not only the satisfaction of seeing him look with the same countenance, and hearing him speak with the same voice they had been so long accustomed to, *Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora, ferebat*—*Such were his gestures, such his eyes and hands!* but they had the further evidence of these peculiar marks: he opened his hands to them, that they might see the marks of the wounds on them; he opened his breast, as the nurse hers to the child, to show them the wound there. Note, The exalted Redeemer will ever show himself open-handed and open-hearted to all his faithful friends and followers. When Christ manifests his love to believers by the comforts of his Spirit, assures them that *because he lives they shall live also*, then he shows them his hands and his side.

[2.] The impression it made upon them, and the good it did them. *First*, They were convinced that they saw the Lord; so was their faith confirmed. At first, they thought they saw an apparition only, a phantasm; but now they knew it was the Lord himself. Thus many true believers, who, while they were weak, feared their comforts were but imaginary, afterwards find them, through grace, real and substantial. They ask not, Is it the Lord? but are assured, it is he. *Secondly*, Then they were glad; that which strengthened their faith raised their joy; believing they rejoice. The evangelist seems to write it with somewhat of transport and triumph. *Then! then! were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.* If it revived



the spirit of Jacob to hear that Joseph was yet alive, how would it revive the heart of these disciples to hear that Jesus is again alive? It is life from the dead to them. Now that word of Christ was fulfilled (ch. xvi. 22), *I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice*. This wiped away all tears from their eyes. Note, A sight of Christ will gladden the heart of a disciple at any time; the more we see of Christ, the more we shall rejoice in him; and our joy will never be perfect till we come *where we shall see him as he is*.

(3.) The honourable and ample commission he gave them to be his agents in the planting of his church, v. 21. Here is,

[1.] The preface to their commission, which was the solemn repetition of the salutation before: *Peace be unto you*. This was intended, either, *First*, To raise their attention to the commission he was about to give them. The former salutation was to still the tumult of their fear, that they might calmly attend to the proofs of his resurrection; this was to reduce the transport of their joy, that they might sedately hear what he had further to say to them; or, *Secondly*, To encourage them to accept of the commission he was giving them. Though it would involve them in a great deal of trouble, yet he designed their honour and comfort in it, and, in the issue, it would be peace to them. Gideon received his commission with this word, *Peace be unto thee*, Judg. vi. 22, 23. Christ is our Peace; if he is with us, peace is to us. Christ was now sending the disciples to publish peace to the world (Isa. lii. 7), and he here not only confers it upon them for their own satisfaction, but commits it to them as a trust to be by them transmitted to all the sons of peace, Luke x. 5, 6.

[2.] The commission itself, which sounds very great: *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*.

*First*, It is easy to understand how Christ sent them; he appointed them to go on with his work upon earth, and to lay out themselves for the spreading of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom, among men. He sent them authorized with a divine warrant, armed with a divine power,—sent them as ambassadors to treat of peace, and as heralds to proclaim it,—sent them as servants to bid to the marriage. Hence they were called *apostles—men sent*.

*Secondly*, But how Christ sent them as the Father sent him is not so easily understood; certainly their commissions and powers were infinitely inferior to his; but, 1. Their work was of the same kind with his, and they were to go on where he left off. They were not sent to be priests and kings, like him, but only prophets. As he was sent to bear witness to the truth, so were they; not to be mediators of the reconciliation, but only preachers and publishers of it. Was he sent, *not to be ministered to, but to minis-*

*ter? not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him? not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fill them up?* So were they. As the Father sent him to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so he sent them into all the world. 2. He had a power to send them equal to that which the Father had to send him. Here the force of the comparison seems to lie. By the same authority that the Father sent me do I send you. This proves the Godhead of Christ; the commissions he gave were of equal authority with those which the Father gave, and as valid and effectual to all intents and purposes, equal with those he gave to the Old Testament prophets in visions. The commissions of Peter and John, by the plain word of Christ, are as good as those of Isaiah and Ezekiel, by the Lord sitting on his throne; nay, equal with that which was given to the Mediator himself for his work. Had he an incontestable authority, and an irresistible ability, for his work? so had they for theirs.

Or thus, *As the Father hath sent me* is, as it were, the recital of his power; by virtue of the authority given him as a Mediator, he gave authority to them, as his ministers, to act for him, and in his name, with the children of men; so that those who received them, or rejected them, received or rejected him, and him that sent him, ch. xiii. 20.

(4.) The qualifying of them for the discharge of the trust reposed in them by their commission (v. 22): *He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. Observe,

[1.] The sign he used to assure them of, and affect them with, the gift he was now about to bestow upon them: *He breathed on them*; not only to show them, by this breath of life, that he himself was really alive, but to signify to them the spiritual life and power which they should receive from him for all the services that lay before them. Probably he breathed upon them all together, not upon each severally; and, though Thomas was not with them, yet the Spirit of the Lord knew where to find him, as he did Eldad and Medad, Num. xi. 26. Christ here seems to refer to the creation of man at first, by the breathing of the breath of life into him (Gen. ii. 7), and to intimate that he himself was the author of that work, and that the spiritual life and strength of ministers and Christians are derived from him, and depend upon him, as much as the natural life of Adam and his seed. As the breath of the Almighty gave life to man and began the old world, so the breath of the mighty Saviour gave life to his ministers, and began a new world, Job xxxiii. 4. Now this intimates to us, *First*, That the Spirit is the breath of Christ, *proceeding from the Son*. The Spirit, in the Old Testament, is compared to breath (Ezek. xxxvii. 9), *Come, O breath*; but the New Testament tells us it is Christ's breath. *The breath of God* is put for the power of his wrath (Isa. xi. 4: xxx. 33); but the breath of Christ

signifies the power of his grace; the breathing of threatenings is changed into the breathings of love by the mediation of Christ. Our words are uttered by our breath, so the word of Christ *is spirit and life*. The word comes from the Spirit, and the Spirit comes along with the word. *Secondly*, That the Spirit is the gift of Christ. The apostles communicated the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, those hands being first lifted up in prayer, for they could only beg this blessing, and carry it as messengers; but Christ conferred the Holy Ghost by breathing, for he is the author of the gift, and from him it comes originally. Moses could not give his Spirit, God did it (Num. xi. 17); but Christ did it himself.

[2.] The solemn grant he made, signified by this sign, "*Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, in part now, as an earnest of what you shall further receive *not many days hence*." They now received more of the Holy Ghost than they had yet received. Thus spiritual blessings are given gradually; to him that has shall be given. Now that Jesus began to be glorified more of the Spirit began to be given: see *ch. vii. 39*. Let us see what is contained in this grant. *First*, Christ hereby gives them assurance of the Spirit's aid in their future work, in the execution of the commission now given them: "*I send you, and you shall have the Spirit to go along with you*." Now the Spirit of the Lord rested upon them, to qualify them for all the services that lay before them. Whom Christ employs he will clothe with his Spirit, and furnish with all needful powers. *Secondly*, He hereby gives them experience of the Spirit's influences in their present case. He had shown them his hands and his side, to convince them of the truth of his resurrection; but the plainest evidences will not of themselves work faith, witness the infidelity of the soldiers, who were the only eye-witnesses of the resurrection. "Therefore *receive ye the Holy Ghost*, to work faith in you, and to open your understandings." They were now in danger of the Jews: "Therefore *receive ye the Holy Ghost*, to work courage in you." What Christ said to them he says to all true believers, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, Eph. i. 13. What Christ gives we must receive, must submit ourselves and our whole souls to the quickening, sanctifying, influences of the blessed Spirit—receive his motions, and comply with them—receive his powers and make use of them: and those who thus obey this word as a precept shall have the benefit of it as a promise; they shall receive the Holy Ghost as the guide of their way and the earnest of their inheritance.

(5.) One particular branch of the power given them by their commission particularized (*v. 23*): "*Whosoever sins you remit*, in the due execution of the powers you are entrusted with, they are remitted to them, and they may take the comfort of it; and whose-

*soever sins you retain*, that is, pronounce unpardoned and the guilt of them bound on, *they are retained*, and the sinner may be sure of it, to his sorrow." Now this follows upon their receiving the Holy Ghost; for, if they had not had an extraordinary spirit of discerning, they had not been fit to be entrusted with such an authority; for, in the strictest sense, this is a special commission to the apostles themselves and the first preachers of the gospel, who could distinguish who were in the *gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity*, and who were not. By virtue of this power, Peter struck Ananias and Sapphira dead, and Paul struck Elymas blind. Yet it must be understood as a general charter to the church and her ministers, not securing an infallibility of judgment to any man or company of men in the world, but encouraging the faithful stewards of the mysteries of God to stand to the gospel they were sent to preach, for that God himself will stand to it. The apostles, in preaching remission, must begin at Jerusalem, though she had lately brought upon herself the guilt of Christ's blood: "Yet you may declare their sins remitted upon gospel terms." And Peter did so, Acts ii. 38; iii. 19. Christ, being risen for our justification, sends his gospel heralds to proclaim the jubilee begun, the act of indemnity now passed; and by this rule men shall be judged, *ch. xii. 48*; Rom. ii. 16; Jam. ii. 12. God will never alter this rule of judgment, nor vary from it; those whom the gospel acquits shall be acquitted, and those whom the gospel condemns shall be condemned, which puts immense honour upon the ministry, and should put immense courage into ministers. Two ways the apostles and ministers of Christ remit and retain sin, and both as having authority:—[1.] By sound doctrine. They are commissioned to tell the world that salvation is to be had upon gospel terms, and no other, and they shall find God will say *Amen* to it; so shall their doom be. [2.] By a strict discipline, applying the general rule of the gospel to particular persons. "Whom you admit into communion with you, according to the rules of the gospel, God will admit into communion with himself; and whom you cast out of communion as impenitent, and obstinate in scandalous and infectious sins, shall be bound over to the righteous judgment of God."

III. The incredulity of Thomas, when the report of this was made to him, which introduced Christ's second appearance.

1. Here is Thomas's absence from this meeting, *v. 24*. He is said to be *one of the twelve*, one of the college of the apostles, who, though now eleven, had been twelve, and were to be so again. They were but eleven, and one of them was missing: Christ's disciples will never be all together till the general assembly at the great day. Perhaps it was Thomas's unhappiness that he was absent—either he was not well, or had not no-



tice; or perhaps it was his sin and folly—either he was diverted by business or company, which he preferred before this opportunity, or he durst not come for *fear of the Jews*; and he called that his prudence and caution which was his cowardice. However, by his absence he missed the satisfaction of seeing his Master risen, and of sharing with the disciples in their joy upon that occasion. Note, Those know not what they lose who carelessly absent themselves from the stated solemn assemblies of Christians.

2. The account which the other disciples gave him of the visit their Master had made them, *v. 25*. The next time they saw him they said unto him, with joy enough, *We have seen the Lord*; and no doubt they related to him all that had passed, particularly the satisfaction he had given them by showing them his hands and his side. It seems, though Thomas was then from them, he was not long from them; absentees for a time must not be condemned as apostates for ever: Thomas is not Judas. Observe with what exultation and triumph they speak it: "*We have seen the Lord*, the most comfortable sight we ever saw." This they said to Thomas, (1.) To upbraid him with his absence: "*We have seen the Lord*, but thou hast not." Or rather, (2.) To inform him: "*We have seen the Lord*, and we wish thou hadst been here, to see him too, for thou wouldest have seen enough to satisfy thee." Note, The disciples of Christ should endeavour to *build up one another in their most holy faith*, both by repeating what they have heard to those that were absent, that they may hear it at second hand; and also by communicating what they have experienced. Those that by faith have seen the Lord, and tasted that he is gracious, should tell others what God has done for their souls; only let boasting be excluded.

3. The objections Thomas raised against the evidence, to justify himself in his unwillingness to admit it. "Tell me not that you have seen the Lord alive; you are too credulous; somebody has made fools of you. For my part, *except I shall not only see in his hands the print of the nails*, but put my finger into it, and thrust my hand into the wound in his side, I am resolved I will not believe." Some, by comparing this with what he said (*ch. xi. 16; xiv. 5*), conjecture him to have been a man of a rough, morose temper, apt to speak peevishly; for all good people are not alike happy in their temper. However, there was certainly much amiss in his conduct at this time. (1.) He had either not heeded, or not duly regarded, what Christ had so often said, and that too according to the Old Testament, that he would *rise again the third day*; so that he ought to have said, *He is risen*, though he had not seen him, nor spoken with any that had. (2.) He did not pay a just deference to the testimony of his fellow-disciples, who were men of wisdom and integrity, and ought

to have been credited. He knew them to be honest men; they all ten of them concurred in the testimony with great assurance; and yet he could not persuade himself to say that *their record was true*. Christ had chosen them to be his witnesses of this very thing to all nations; and yet Thomas, one of their own fraternity, would not allow them to be competent witnesses, nor trust them further than he could see them. It was not, however, their veracity that he questioned, but their prudence; he feared they were too credulous. (3.) He tempted Christ, and limited the *Holy One of Israel*, when he would be convinced by his own method, or not at all. He could not be sure that the print of the nails, which the apostles told him they had seen, would admit the putting of his finger into it, or the wound in his side the thrusting in of his hand; nor was it fit to deal so roughly with a living body; yet Thomas ties up his faith to this evidence. Either he will be humoured, and have his fancy gratified, or he will not believe; see *Matt. xvi. 1; xxvii. 42*. (4.) The open avowal of this in the presence of the disciples was an offence and discouragement to them. It was not only a sin, but a scandal. As one coward makes many, so does one unbeliever, one sceptic, making his brethren's heart to faint like his heart, *Deut. xx. 8*. Had he only thought this evil, and then laid his hand upon his mouth, to suppress it, his error had remained with himself; but his proclaiming his infidelity, and that so peremptorily, might be of ill consequence to the rest, who were as yet but weak and wavering.

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within; and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, *Peace be unto you*. 27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. 28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. 29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. 30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

We have here an account of another ap-



pearance of Christ to his disciples, after his resurrection, when Thomas was now with them. And concerning this we may observe,

I. When it was that Christ repeated his visit to his disciples: *After eight days*, that day seven-night after he rose, which must therefore be, as that was, *the first day of the week*.

1. He deferred his next appearance for some time, to show his disciples that he was not risen to such a life as he had formerly lived, to converse constantly with them, but was as one that belonged to another world, and visited this only as angels do, now and then, when there was occasion. Where Christ was during these eight days, and the rest of the time of his abode on earth, it is folly to enquire, and presumption to determine. Wherever he was, no doubt *angels ministered unto him*. In the beginning of his ministry he had been forty days unseen, tempted by the evil spirit, Matt. iv. 1, 2. And now in the beginning of his glory he was forty days, for the most part unseen, attended by good spirits.

2. He deferred it so long as seven days. And why so? (1.) That he might put a rebuke upon Thomas for his incredulity. He had neglected the former meeting of the disciples; and, to teach him to prize those seasons of grace better for the future, he cannot have such another opportunity for several days. He that slips one tide must stay a good while for another. A very melancholy week, we have reason to think Thomas had of it, drooping, and in suspense, while the other disciples were full of joy; and it was owing to himself and his own folly. (2.) That he might try the faith and patience of the rest of the disciples. They had gained a great point when they were satisfied that they had seen the Lord. *Then were the disciples glad*; but he would try whether they could keep the ground they had got, when they saw no more of him for some days. And thus he would gradually wean them from his bodily presence, which they had doted and depended too much upon. (3.) That he might put an honour upon the first day of the week, and give a plain intimation of his will, that it should be observed in his church as the Christian sabbath, the weekly day of holy rest and holy convocations. That one day in seven should be religiously observed was an appointment from the beginning, as old as innocency; and that in the kingdom of the Messiah the first day of the week should be that solemn day this was indication enough, that Christ on that day once and again met his disciples in a religious assembly. It is highly probable that in his former appearance to them he appointed them that day seven-night to be together again, and promised to meet them; and also that he appeared to them every first day of the week, besides other times, during the

forty days. The religious observance of that day has been thence transmitted down to us through every age of the church. This therefore is *the day which the Lord has made*.

II. Where, and how, Christ made them this visit. It was at Jerusalem, for the doors were shut now, as before, for fear of the Jews. There they staid, to keep the feast of unleavened bread seven days, which expired the day before this; yet they would not set out on their journey to Galilee on the first day of the week, because it was the Christian sabbath, but staid till the day after. Now observe, 1. That Thomas was with them; though he had withdrawn himself once, yet not a second time. When we have lost one opportunity, we should give the more earnest heed to lay hold on the next, that we may recover our losses. It is a good sign if such a loss whet our desires, and a bad sign if it cool them. The disciples admitted him among them, and did not insist upon his believing the resurrection of Christ, as they did, because as yet it was but darkly revealed; they did not receive him to doubtful disputation, but bade him welcome to come and see. But observe, Christ did not appear to Thomas, for his satisfaction, till he found him in society with the rest of his disciples, because he would countenance the meetings of Christians and ministers, for there will he be *in the midst of them*. And, besides, he would have all the disciples witnesses of the rebuke he gave to Thomas, and yet withal of the tender care he had of him. 2. That Christ came in among them, and stood *in the midst*, and they all knew him, for he showed himself now, just as he had shown himself before (v. 19), still the same, and no changing. See the condescension of our Lord Jesus. The gates of heaven were ready to be opened to him, and there he might have been in the midst of the adorations of a world of angels; yet, for the benefit of his church, he lingered on earth, and visited the little private meetings of his poor disciples, and is in the midst of them. 3. He saluted them all in a friendly manner, as he had done before; he said, *Peace be unto you*. This was no vain repetition, but significant of the abundant and assured peace which Christ gives, and of the continuance of his blessings upon his people, for they *fail not*, but are *new every morning*, new every meeting.

III. What passed between Christ and Thomas at this meeting; and that only is recorded, though we may suppose he said a great deal to the rest of them. Here is,

1. Christ's gracious condescension to Thomas, v. 27. He singled him out from the rest, and applied himself particularly to him: "*Reach hither thy finger*, and, since thou wilt have it so, *behold my hands*, and satisfy thy curiosity to the utmost about the *print of the nails*; *reach hither thy hand*, and, if nothing less will convince thee, *thrust it into my side*." Here we have, (1.) An implicit



rebuke of Thomas's incredulity, in the plain reference which is here had to what Thomas had said, answering it word for word, for he had heard it, though unseen; and one would think that his telling him of it should put him to the blush. Note, There is not an unbelieving word on our tongues, no, nor thought in our minds, at any time, but it is known to the Lord Jesus, Ps. lxxviii. 21. (2.) An express condescension to his weakness, which appears in two things:—[1.] That he suffers his wisdom to be prescribed to. Great spirits will not be dictated to by their inferiors, especially in their acts of grace; yet Christ is pleased here to accommodate himself even to Thomas's fancy in a needless thing, rather than break with him, and leave him in his unbelief. He will not *break the bruised reed*, but, as a good shepherd, *gathers that which was driven away*, Ezek. xxxiv. 16. We ought thus to *bear the infirmities of the weak*, Rom. xv. 1, 2. [2.] He suffers his wounds to be raked into, allows Thomas even to thrust his hand into his side, if then at last he would believe. Thus, for the confirmation of our faith, he has instituted an ordinance on purpose to keep his death in remembrance, though it was an ignominious, shameful death, and one would think should rather have been forgotten, and no more said of it; yet, because it was such an evidence of his love as would be an encouragement to our faith, he appoints the memorial of it to be celebrated. And in that ordinance wherein we *show the Lord's death* we are called, as it were, to put our finger *into the print of the nails*. *Reach hither thy hand to him, who reacheth forth his helping, inviting, giving hand to thee.*

It is an affecting word with which Christ closes up what he had to say to Thomas: *Be not faithless but believing*: μή γίνωαι ἀπιστος—do not thou become an unbeliever; as if he would have been sealed up under unbelief, had he not yielded now. This warning is given to us all: *Be not faithless*; for, if we are faithless, we are Christless and graceless, hopeless and joyless; let us therefore say, *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.*

2. Thomas's believing consent to Jesus Christ. He is now ashamed of his incredulity, and cries out, *My Lord and my God*, v. 28. We are not told whether he did put his finger into the print of the nails; it should seem, he did not, for Christ says (v. 29), *Thou hast seen, and believed*; seeing sufficed. And now faith comes off a conqueror, after a struggle with unbelief.

(1.) Thomas is now fully satisfied of the truth of Christ's resurrection—that the same Jesus that was crucified is now alive, and this is he. His slowness and backwardness to believe may help to strengthen our faith; for hereby it appears that the witnesses of Christ's resurrection, who attested it to the world, and pawned their lives upon it, were not easy credulous men, but cautious enough, and

suspended their belief of it till they saw the utmost evidence of it they could desire. Thus *out of the eater came forth meat*.

(2.) He therefore believed him to be Lord and God, and we are to believe him so. [1.] We must believe his deity—that he is God; not a man made God, but God made man, as this evangelist had laid down his thesis at first, ch. i. 1. The author and head of our holy religion has the wisdom, power, sovereignty, and unchangeableness of God, which was necessary, because he was to be not only the founder of it, but the foundation of it for its constant support, and the fountain of life for its supply. [2.] His mediation—that he is Lord, the one Lord, 1 Cor. viii. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5. He is sufficiently authorized, as plenipotentiary, to settle the great concerns that lie between God and man, to take up the controversy which would inevitably have been our ruin, and to establish the correspondence that was necessary to our happiness; see Acts ii. 36; Rom. xiv. 9.

(3.) He consented to him as his Lord and his God. In faith there must be the consent of the will to gospel terms, as well as the assent of the understanding to gospel truths. We must accept of Christ to be that to us which the Father hath appointed him. *My Lord* refers to *Adonai*—my foundation and stay; *my God* to *Elohim*—my prince and judge. God having constituted him the umpire and referee, we must approve the choice, and entirely refer ourselves to him. This is the vital act of faith, He is mine, Cant. ii. 16.

(4.) He made an open profession of this, before those that had been the witnesses of his unbelieving doubts. He says it to Christ, and, to complete the sense, we must read it, *Thou art my Lord and my God*; or, speaking to his brethren, *This is my Lord and my God*. Do we accept of Christ as our *Lord God*? We must go to him, and tell him so, as David (Ps. xvi. 2), deliver the surrender to him as *our act and deed*, tell others so, as those that triumph in our relation to Christ: *This is my beloved*. Thomas speaks with an ardency of affection, as one that took hold of Christ with all his might, *My Lord and my God*.

3. The judgment of Christ upon the whole (v. 29): "*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed*, and it is well thou art brought to it at last upon any terms; but *blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have believed.*" Here,

(1.) Christ owns Thomas a believer. Sound and sincere believers, though they be slow and weak, shall be graciously accepted of the Lord Jesus. Those who have long stood it out, if at last they yield, shall find him ready to forgive. No sooner did Thomas consent to Christ than Christ gives him the comfort of it, and lets him know that he believes.

(2.) He upbraids him with his former incredulity. He might well be ashamed to

think, [1.] That he had been so backward to believe, and came so slowly to his own comforts. Those that in sincerity have closed with Christ see a great deal of reason to lament that they did not do it sooner. [2.] That it was not without much ado that he was brought to believe at last: "If thou hadst not seen me alive, thou wouldst not have believed; but if no evidence must be admitted but that of our own senses, and we must believe nothing but what we ourselves are eye-witnesses of, farewell all commerce and conversation. If this must be the only method of proof, how must the world be converted to the faith of Christ? He is therefore justly blamed for laying so much stress upon this."

(3.) He commends the faith of those who believe upon easier terms. Thomas, as a believer, was truly blessed; but rather *blessed are those that have not seen*. It is not meant of not seeing the objects of faith (for these are invisible, Heb. xi. 1; 2 Cor. iv. 18), but the motives of faith—Christ's miracles, and especially his resurrection; blessed are those that see not these, and yet believe in Christ. This may look, either backward, upon the Old-Testament saints, who had not seen the things which they saw, and yet believed the promise made unto the fathers, and lived by that faith; or forward, upon those who should afterwards believe, the Gentiles, who had never seen Christ in the flesh, as the Jews had. This faith is more laudable and praise-worthy than theirs who saw and believed; for, [1.] It evidences a better temper of mind in those that do believe. Not to see and yet to believe argues greater industry in searching after truth, and greater ingenuousness of mind in embracing it. He that believes upon that sight has his resistance conquered by a sort of violence; but he that believes without it, like the Bereans, is more noble. [2.] It is a greater instance of the power of divine grace. The less sensible the evidence is the more does the work of faith appear to be the Lord's doing. 'Peter is blessed in his faith, because flesh and blood have not revealed it to him, Matt. xvi. 17. Flesh and blood contribute more to their faith that see and believe, than to theirs who see not and yet believe. Dr. Lightfoot quotes a saying of one of the rabbins, "That one proselyte is more acceptable to God than all the thousands of Israel that stood before mount Sinai; for they saw and received the law, but a proselyte sees not, and yet receives it."

IV. The remark which the evangelist makes upon his narrative, like an historian drawing towards a conclusion, v. 30, 31. And here,

1. He assures us that many other things occurred, which were all worthy to be recorded, but are *not written in the book: many signs*. Some refer this to all the signs that Jesus did during his whole life, all the won-

drous words he spoke, and all the wondrous works he did. But it seems rather to be confined to the signs he did after his resurrection, for these were in the presence of the disciples only, who are here spoken of, Acts x. 41. Divers of his appearances are not recorded, as appears, 1 Cor. xv. 5—7. See Acts i. 3. Now, (1.) We may here improve this general attestation, that there were other signs, many others, for the confirmation of our faith; and, being added to the particular narratives, they very much strengthen the evidence. Those that recorded the resurrection of Christ were not put to fish for evidence, to take up such short and scanty proofs as they could find, and make up the rest with conjecture. No, they had evidence enough and to spare, and more witnesses to produce than they had occasion for. The disciples, in whose presence these other signs were done, were to be preachers of Christ's resurrection to others, and therefore it was requisite they should have proofs of it *ex abundanti—in abundance*, that they might have a strong consolation, who ventured life and all upon it. (2.) We need not ask why they were not all written, or why not more than these, or others than these; for it is enough for us that so it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration this was given. Had this history been a mere human composition, it had been swelled with a multitude of depositions and affidavits, to prove the contested truth of Christ's resurrection, and long arguments drawn up for the demonstration of it; but, being a divine history, the penmen write with a noble security, relating what amounted to a competent proof, sufficient to convince those that were willing to be taught and to condemn those that were obstinate in their unbelief; and, if this satisfy not, more would not. Men produce all they have to say, that they may gain credit; but God does not, for he can give faith. Had this history been written for the entertainment of the curious, it would have been more copious, for every circumstance would have brightened and embellished the story; but it was written to bring men to believe, and enough is said to answer that intention, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

2. He instructs us in the design of recording what we do find here (v. 31): "These accounts are given in this and the following chapter, *that you might believe* upon these evidences; that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, declared with power to be so by his resurrection."

(1.) Here is the design of those that wrote the gospel. Some write books for their diversion, and publish them for their profit or applause, others to oblige the Athenian humour, others to instruct the world in arts and sciences for their secular advantage; but the evangelists wrote without any view of temporal benefit to themselves or others, but to



bring men to Christ and heaven, and, in order to this, to persuade men to believe; and for this they took the most fitting methods, they brought to the world a divine revelation, supported with its due evidences.

(2.) The duty of those that read and hear the gospel. It is their duty to believe, to embrace, the doctrine of Christ, and that record given concerning him, 1 John v. 11. [1.] We are here told what the great gospel truth is which we are to believe—that *Jesus is that Christ, that Son of God*. First, That he is the Christ, the person who, under the title of the Messiah, was promised to, and expected by, the Old-Testament saints, and who, according to the signification of the name, is *anointed* of God to be a prince and a Saviour. Secondly, That he is the Son of God; not only as Mediator (for then he had not been greater than Moses, who was a prophet, intercessor, and lawgiver), but antecedent to his being the Mediator; for if he had not been a divine person, endued with the power of God and entitled to the glory of God, he had not been qualified for the undertaking—not fit either to do the Redeemer's work or to wear the Redeemer's crown. [2.] What the great gospel blessedness is which we are to hope for—*That believing we shall have life through his name*. This is, First, To direct our faith; it must have an eye to the life, the crown of life, the tree of life set before us. Life through Christ's name, the life proposed in the covenant which is made with us in Christ, is what we must propose to ourselves as the fulness of our joy and the abundant recompence of all our services and sufferings. Secondly, To encourage our faith, and invite us to believe. Upon the prospect of some great advantage, men will venture far; and greater advantage there cannot be than that which is offered by the *words of this life*, as the gospel is called, Acts v. 20. It includes both spiritual life, in conformity to God and communion with him, and eternal life, in the vision and fruition of him. Both are through Christ's name, by his merit and power, and both indefeasibly sure to all true believers.

#### CHAP. XXI.

The evangelist seemed to have concluded his history with the foregoing chapter; but (as St. Paul sometimes in his epistles), new matter occurring, he begins again. He had said that there were many other signs which Jesus did for the proof of his resurrection. And in this chapter he mentions one of these many, which was Christ's appearance to some of his disciples at the sea of Tiberias, in which we have an account, I. How he discovered himself to them as they were fishing, filled their net, and then very familiarly came and dined with them upon what they had caught, ver. 1—14. II. What discourse he had with Peter after dinner, 1. Concerning himself, ver. 15—19. 2. Concerning John, ver. 20—23. III. The solemn conclusion of this gospel, ver. 24, 25. It is strange that any should suppose that this chapter was added by some other hand, when it is expressly said (ver. 25) that the disciple whom Jesus loved is he which testifieth of these things.

**A**FTER these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he *himself*, 2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas

called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. 5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. 6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him* (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea. 8 And the other disciples came in a little ship (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits); dragging the net with fishes. 9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. 10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. 11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. 12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

We have here an account of Christ's appearance to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias, Now, 1. Let us compare this appearance with those that *went before*. In those Christ showed himself to his disciples when they were met in a solemn assembly (it should seem, for religious worship) upon a Lord's day, and when they were all together, perhaps expecting his appearing; but in this



he showed himself to some of them occasionally, upon a week-day, when they were fishing, and little thought of it. Christ has many ways of making himself known to his people; usually in his ordinances, but sometimes by his Spirit he visits them when they are employed in common business, as the *shepherds* who were *keeping their flocks by night* (Luke ii. 8), even so *here also*, Gen. xvi. 13. 2. Let us compare it with that which followed at the mountain in Galilee, where Christ had appointed them to meet him, Matt. xxviii. 16. Thitherward they moved as soon as the days of unleavened bread were over, and disposed of themselves as they thought fit, till the time fixed for this interview, or general rendezvous. Now this appearance was while they were waiting for that, that they might not be weary of waiting. Christ is often better than his word, but never worse, often anticipates and outdoes the believing expectations of his people, but never disappoints them. As to the particulars of the story, we may observe,

I. Who they were to whom Christ now showed himself (v. 2): not to all the twelve, but to seven of them only. Nathanael is mentioned as one of them, whom we have not met with since *ch. i.* But some think he was the same with Bartholomew, one of the twelve. The two not named are supposed to be Philip of Bethsaida and Andrew of Capernaum. Observe here, 1. It is good for the disciples of Christ to be much together; not only in solemn religious assemblies, but in common conversation, and about common business. Good Christians should by this means both testify and increase their affection to, and delight in, each other, and edify one another both by discourse and example. 2. Christ chose to manifest himself to them when they were together; not only to countenance Christian society, but that they might be joint witnesses of the same matter of fact, and so might corroborate one another's testimony. Here were seven together to attest this, on which some observe that the Roman law required seven witnesses to a testament. 3. Thomas was one of them, and is named next to Peter, as if he now kept closer to the meetings of the apostles than ever. It is well if losses by our neglects make us more careful afterwards not to let opportunities slip.

II. How they were employed, v. 3. Observe,

1. Their agreement to go a fishing. They knew not well what to do with themselves. For my part, says Peter, *I will go a fishing; We will go with thee* then, say they, for we will keep together. Though commonly two of a trade cannot agree, yet they could. Some think they did amiss in returning to their boats and nets, which they had left; but then Christ would not have countenanced them in it with a visit. It was rather commendable in them; for they did it, (1.) To redeem time, and not be idle. They were

not yet appointed to preach the resurrection of Christ. Their commission was in the drawing, but not perfected. The hour for entering upon action was not come. It is probable that their Master had directed them to say nothing of his resurrection till after his ascension, nay, not till after the pouring out of the Spirit, and then they were to begin at Jerusalem. Now, in the mean time, rather than do nothing, they would go a fishing; not for recreation, but for business. It is an instance of their humility. Though they were advanced to be sent of Christ, as he was of the Father, yet they did not take state upon them, but remembered *the rock out of which they were hewn*. It is an instance likewise of their industry, and bespeaks them good husbands of their time. While they were waiting, they would not be idling. Those who would give an account of their time with joy should contrive to fill up the vacancies of it, to gather up the fragments of it. (2.) That they might help to maintain themselves and not be burdensome to any. While their Master was with them, those who ministered to him were kind to them; but now that the *bridegroom was taken from them* they must *fast* in those days, and therefore their own hands, as Paul's, must *minister to their necessities*; and for this reason Christ asked them, *Have you any meat?* This teaches us with quietness to *work and eat our own bread*.

2. Their disappointment in their fishing. That night they caught nothing, though, it is probable, they *toiled all night*, as Luke v. 5. See the vanity of this world; the hand of the diligent often returns empty. Even good men may come short of desired success in their honest undertakings. We may be in the way of our duty, and yet not prosper. Providence so ordered it that all that night they should catch nothing, that the miraculous draught of fishes in the morning might be the more wonderful and the more acceptable. In those disappointments which to us are very grievous God has often designs that are very gracious. Man has indeed *a dominion over the fish of the sea*, but they are not always at his beck; God only knows the *paths of the sea*, and commands that which passeth through them.

III. After what manner Christ made himself known to them. It is said (v. 1), *He showed himself*. His body, though a true and real body, was raised, as ours will be, a spiritual body, and so was visible only when he himself was pleased to make it so; or, rather, came and removed so quickly that it was here or there in an instant, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*. Four things are observable in the appearance of Christ to them:—

1. He showed himself to them seasonably (v. 4): *When the morning was now come*, after a fruitless night's toil, Jesus *stood on the shore*. Christ's time of making himself



known to his people is when they are most at a loss. When they think they have lost themselves, he will let them know that they have not lost him. Weeping may endure for a night; but joy comes, if Christ comes, in the morning. Christ appeared to them, not walking upon the water, because, being risen from the dead, he was not to be with them as he had been; but standing upon the shore, because now they were to make towards him. Some of the ancients put this significancy upon it, that Christ, having finished his work, was got through a stormy sea, a sea of blood, to a safe and quiet shore, where he stood in triumph; but the disciples, having their work before them, were yet at sea, in toil and peril. It is a comfort to us, when our passage is rough and stormy, that our Master is at shore, and we are hastening to him.

2. He showed himself to them gradually. The disciples, though they had been intimately acquainted with him, knew not, all at once, that it was Jesus. Little expecting to see him there, and not looking intently upon him, they took him for some common person waiting the arrival of their boat, to buy their fish. Note, Christ is often nearer to us than we think he is, and so we shall find afterwards, to our comfort.

3. Heshowed himself to them by an instance of his pity, v. 5. He called to them, *Children, παιδια*—"Lads, have you any meat? Have you caught any fish?" Here, (1.) The compellation is very familiar; he speaks unto them as unto his sons, with the care and tenderness of a father: *Children*. Though he had now entered upon his exalted state, he spoke to his disciples with as much kindness and affection as ever. They were not children in age, but they were his children, the children which God had given him. (2.) The question is very kind: *Have you any meat?* He asks as a tender father concerning his children whether they be provided with that which is fit for them, that, if they be not, he may take care for their supply.

Note, *The Lord is for the body*, 1 Cor. vi. 13. Christ takes cognizance of the temporal wants of his people, and has promised them not only grace sufficient, but food convenient. *Verily they shall be fed*, Ps. xxxvii.

3. Christ looks into the cottages of the poor, and asks, *Children, have you any meat?* thereby inviting them to open their case before him, and by the prayer of faith to make their requests known to him: and then let them be careful for nothing; for Christ takes care of them, takes care for them. Christ has herein set us an example of compassionate concern for our brethren. There are many poor householders disabled for labour, or disappointed in it, that are reduced to straits, whom the rich should enquire after thus, *Have you any meat?* For the most necessitous are commonly the least clamorous To this question the disciples gave a

short answer, and, some think, with an air of discontent and peevishness. They said, *No*; not giving him any such friendly and respectful title as he had given them. So short do the best come in their returns of love to the Lord Jesus. Christ put the question to them, not because he did not know their wants, but because he would know them from them. Those that would have supplies from Christ must own themselves empty and needy.

4. He showed himself to them by an instance of his power; and this perfected the discovery (v. 6): he ordered them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, the contrary side to what they had been casting it on; and then they, who were going home empty-handed, were enriched with a great draught of fishes. Here we have, (1.) The orders Christ gave them, and the promise annexed to those orders: *Cast the net there in such a place, and you shall find*. He from whom nothing is hid, no, not the inhabitants under the waters (Job xxvi. 5), knew on what side of the ship the shoal of fishes was, and to that side he directs them. Note, Divine providence extends itself to things most minute and contingent; and they are happy that know how to take hints thence in the conduct of their affairs, and acknowledge it in all their ways. (2.) Their obedience of these orders, and the good success of it. As yet they knew not that it was Jesus; however, they were willing to be advised by any body, and did not bid this supposed stranger mind his own business and not meddle with theirs, but took his counsel; in being thus observant of strangers, they were obedient to their Master unawares. And it sped wonderfully well; now they had a draught that paid them for all their pains. Note, Those that are humble, diligent, and patient (though their labours may be crossed) shall be crowned; they sometimes live to see their affairs take a happy turn, after many struggles and fruitless attempts. There is nothing lost by observing Christ's orders. Those are likely to speed well that follow the rule of the word, the guidance of the Spirit, and the intimations of Providence; for this is casting the net on the right side of the ship. Now the draught of fishes may be considered, [1.] As a miracle in itself: and so it was designed to prove that Jesus Christ was raised in power, though sown in weakness, and that all things were put under his feet, the fishes of the sea not excepted. Christ manifests himself to his people by doing that for them which none else can do, and things which they looked not for. [2.] As a mercy to them; for the seasonable and abundant supply of their necessities. When their ingenuity and industry failed them, the power of Christ came in opportunely for their relief; for he would take care that those who had left all for him should not want any good thing. When we are most at a loss, *Jehovah-jireh*. [3.] As the memorial of a former

mercy, with which Christ had formerly recompensed Peter for the loan of his boat, Luke v. 4, &c. This miracle nearly resembled that, and could not but put Peter in mind of it, which helped him to improve this; for both that and this affected him much, as meeting him in his own element, in his own employment. Latter favours are designed to bring to mind former favours, that eaten bread may not be forgotten. [4.]

As a mystery, and very significant of that work to which Christ was now with an enlarged commission sending them forth. The prophets had been fishing for souls, and caught nothing, or very little; but the apostles, who let down the net at Christ's word, had wonderful success. *Many were the children of the desolate*, Gal. iv. 27. They themselves, in pursuance of their former mission, when they were first made *fishers of men*, had had small success in comparison with what they should now have. When, soon after this, three thousand were converted in one day, then the net was cast on the right side of the ship. It is an encouragement to Christ's ministers to continue their diligence in their work. One happy draught, at length, may be sufficient to repay many years of toil at the gospel net.

IV. How the disciples received this discovery which Christ made of himself, v. 7, 8, where we find,

1. That John was the most intelligent and quick-sighted disciple. He whom Jesus loved was the first that said, *It is the Lord*; for those whom Christ loves he will in a special manner manifest himself to: his secret is with his favourites. John had adhered more closely to his Master in his sufferings than any of them: and therefore he has a clearer eye and a more discerning judgment than any of them, in recompence for his constancy. When John was himself aware that it was the Lord, he communicated his knowledge to those with him; for this *dispensation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal*. Those that know Christ themselves should endeavour to bring others acquainted with him; we need not engross him, there is enough in him for us all. John tells Peter particularly his thoughts, that it was the Lord, knowing he would be glad to see him above any of them. Though Peter had denied his Master, yet, having repented, and being taken into the communion of the disciples again, they were as free and familiar with him as ever.

2. That Peter was the most zealous and warm-hearted disciple; for as soon as he heard it was the Lord (for which he took John's word) the ship could not hold him, nor could he stay till the bringing of it to shore, but into the sea he throws himself presently, that he might come first to Christ. (1.) He showed his respect to Christ by *airing his fisher's coat* about him, that he might appear before his Master in the best

clothes he had, and not rudely rush into his presence, stripped as he was to his waistcoat and drawers, because the work he was about was toilsome, and he was resolved to take pains in it. Perhaps the fisher's coat was made of leather, or oil-cloth, and would keep out wet; and he girt it to him that he might make the best of his way through the water to Christ, as he used to do after his nets, when he was intent upon his fishing. (2.) He showed the strength of his affection to Christ, and his earnest desire to be with him, by casting himself into the sea; and either wading or swimming to shore, to come to him. When he walked upon the water to Christ (Matt. xiv. 28, 29), it was said, *He came down out of the ship* deliberately; but here it is said, *He cast himself into the sea* with precipitation; sink or swim, he would show his good-will and aim to be with Jesus. "If Christ suffer me," thinks he, "to drown, and come short of him, it is but what I deserve for denying him." Peter had had much forgiven, and made it appear he loved much by his willingness to run hazards, and undergo hardships, to come to him. Those that have been with Jesus will be willing to swim through a stormy sea, a sea of blood, to come to him. And it is a laudable contention amongst Christ's disciples to strive who shall be first with him.

3. That the rest of the disciples were careful and honest hearted. Though they were not in such a transport of zeal as to throw themselves into the sea, like Peter, yet they hastened in the boat to the shore, and made the best of their way (v. 8): *The other disciples*, and John with them, who had first discovered that it was Christ, came slowly, yet they came to Christ. Now here we may observe, (1.) How variously God dispenses his gifts. Some excel, as Peter and John; are very eminent in gifts and graces, and are thereby distinguished from their brethren; others are but ordinary disciples, that mind their duty, and are faithful to him, but do nothing to make themselves remarkable; and yet both the one and the other, the eminent and the obscure, shall sit down together with Christ in glory; nay, and perhaps *the last shall be first*. Of those that do excel, some, like John, are eminently contemplative, have great gifts of knowledge, and serve the church with them; others, like Peter, are eminently active and courageous, are strong, and do exploits, and are thus very serviceable to their generation. Some are useful as the church's eyes, others as the church's hands, and all for the good of the body. (2.) What a great deal of difference there may be between some good people and others in the way of their honouring Christ, and yet both *accepted of him*. Some serve Christ more in acts of devotion, and extraordinary expressions of a religious zeal; and they do well, *to the Lord they do it*. Peter ought not to be censured for casting himself



into the sea, but commended for his zeal and the strength of his affection; and so must those be who, in love to Christ, quit the world, with Mary, to *sit at his feet*. But others serve Christ more in the affairs of the world. They continue in that ship, drag the net, and bring the fish to shore, as the other disciples here; and such ought not to be censured as worldly, for they, in their place, are as truly serving Christ as the other, even in serving tables. If all the disciples had done as Peter did, what had become of their fish and their nets? And yet if Peter had done as they did we had wanted this instance of holy zeal. Christ was well pleased with both, and so must we be. (3.) That there are several ways of bringing Christ's disciples to shore to him from off the sea of this world. Some are brought to him by a violent death, as the martyrs, who threw themselves into the sea, in their zeal for Christ; others are brought to him by a natural death, dragging the net, which is less terrible; but both meet at length on the safe and quiet shore with Christ.

V. What entertainment the Lord Jesus gave them when they came ashore.

1. He had provision ready for them. When they came to land, wet and cold, weary and hungry, they found a good fire there to warm them and dry them, and fish and bread, competent provision for a good meal. (1.) We need not be curious in enquiring whence this fire, and fish, and bread, came, any more than whence the meat came which the ravens brought to Elijah. He that could multiply the loaves and fishes that were could make new ones if he pleased, or turn stones into bread, or send his angels to fetch it, where he knew it was to be had. It is uncertain whether this provision was made ready in the open air, or in some fisher's cabin or hut upon the shore; but here was nothing stately or delicate. We should be content with mean things, for Christ was. (2.) We may be comforted in this instance of Christ's care of his disciples; he has wherewith to supply all our wants, and *knows what things we have need of*. He kindly provided for those fishermen, when they came weary from their work; for *verily those shall be fed who trust in the Lord and do good*. It is encouraging to Christ's ministers, whom he hath made fishers of men, that they may depend upon him who employs them to provide for them; and if they should miss of encouragement in this world, should be reduced as Paul was to *hunger, and thirst, and fastings often*, let them content themselves with what they have here; they have better things in reserve, and shall *eat and drink with Christ at his table in his kingdom*, Luke xxii. 30. Awhile ago, the disciples had entertained Christ with a *broiled fish* (Luke xxiv. 42), and now, as a friend, he returned their kindness, and entertained them with one; nay, in the draught of

fishes, he repaid them more than a hundred fold.

2. He called for some of that which they had caught, and they produced it, v. 10, 11. Observe here,

(1.) The command Christ gave them to bring their draught of fish to shore: "Bring of the fish hither, which you have now caught, and let us have some of them;" not as if he needed it, and could not make up a dinner for them without it; but, [1.] He would have them eat the labour of their hands, Ps. cxxviii. 2. What is got by God's blessing on our own industry and honest labour, if withal *God give us power to eat of it, and enjoy good in our labour*, hath a peculiar sweetness in it. It is said of the slothful man that *he roasteth not that which he took in hunting*; he cannot find in his heart to dress what he has been at the pains to take, Prov. xii. 27. But Christ would hereby teach us to use what we have. [2.] He would have them taste the gifts of his miraculous bounty, that they might be witnesses both of his power and of his goodness. The benefits Christ bestows upon us are not to be buried and laid up, but to be used and laid out. [3.] He would give a specimen of the spiritual entertainment he has for all believers, which, in this respect, is most free and familiar—that *he sups with them, and they with him*; their graces are pleasing to him, and his comforts are so to them; what he works in them he accepts from them. [4.] Ministers, who are fishers of men, must bring all they catch to their Master, for on him their success depends.

(2) Their obedience to this command, v. 11. It was said (v. 6), *They were not able to draw the net to shore, for the multitude of fishes*; that is, they found it difficult, it was more than they could well do; but he that bade them bring it to shore made it easy. Thus the fishers of men, when they have enclosed souls in the gospel net, cannot bring them to shore, cannot carry on and complete the good work begun, without the continued influence of the divine grace. If he that helped us to catch them, when without his help we should have caught nothing, do not help us to keep them, and draw them to land, by *building them up in their most holy faith*, we shall lose them at last, 1 Cor. iii. 7. Observe, [1.] Who it was that was most active in landing the fishes: it was Peter, who, as in the former instance (v. 7), had shown a more zealous affection to his Master's person than any of them, so in this he showed a more ready obedience to his Master's command; but all that are faithful are not alike forward. [2.] The number of the fishes that were caught. They had the curiosity to count them, and perhaps it was in order to the making of a dividend; they were in all a *hundred and fifty and three*, and all *great fishes*. These were many more than they needed for their present supply,

but they might sell them, and the money would serve to bear their charges back to Jerusalem, whither they were shortly to return.

[3.] A further instance of Christ's care of them, to increase both the miracle and the mercy: *For all there were so many, and great fishes too, yet was not the net broken*; so that they lost none of their fish, nor damaged their net. It was said (Luke v. 6), *Their net broke*. Perhaps this was a borrowed net, for they had long since left their own; and, if so, Christ would teach us to take care of what we have borrowed, as much as if it were our own. It was well that their net did not break, for they had not now the leisure they had formerly had to mend their nets. The net of the gospel has enclosed multitudes, three thousand in one day, and yet is not broken; it is still as mighty as ever to bring souls to God.

3. He invited them to dinner. Observing them to keep their distance, and that *they were afraid to ask him, Who art thou?* because they *knew it was their Lord*, he called to them very familiarly, *Come, and dine*.

(1.) See here how free Christ was with his disciples; he treated them as friends; he did not say, *Come, and wait*, *Come, and attend me*, but *Come, and dine*; not, *Go dine by yourselves*, as servants are appointed to do, but *Come, and dine with me*. This kind invitation may be alluded to, to illustrate, [1.] The call Christ gives his disciples into communion with him in grace here. *All things are now ready; Come, and dine*. Christ is a feast; come, dine upon him; his flesh is meat indeed, his blood drink indeed. Christ is a friend; come, dine with him, he will bid you welcome, Cant. v. 1. [2.] The call he will give them into the fruition of him in glory hereafter: *Come, ye blessed of my Father; come, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob*. Christ has wherewithal to dine all his friends and followers; there is room and provision enough for them all.

(2.) See how reverent the disciples were before Christ. They were somewhat shy of using the freedom he invited them to, and, by his courting them to their meat, it should seem that they stood pausing. Being *to eat with a ruler*, such a ruler, *they consider diligently what is before them*. None of them *durst ask him, Who art thou?* Either, [1.] Because they would not be so bold with him. Though perhaps he appeared now in something of a disguise at first, as to the two disciples when *their eyes were holden that they should not know him*, yet they had very good reason to think it was he, and could be no other. Or, [2.] Because they would not so far betray their own folly. When he had given them this instance of his power and goodness, they must be stupid indeed if they questioned whether it was he or no. When God, in his providence, has given us sensible proofs of his care for our bodies, and has

given us, in his grace, manifest proofs of his good-will to our souls, and good work upon them, we should be ashamed of our distrusts, and not dare to question that which he has left us no room to question. Groundless doubts must be stifled, and not started.

4. He carved for them, as the master of the feast, v. 13. Observing them to be still shy and timorous, *he comes, and takes bread himself, and gives them*, some to each of them, *and fish likewise*. No doubt he craved a blessing and gave thanks (as Luke xxiv. 30), but, it being his known and constant practice, it did not need to be mentioned. (1.) The entertainment here was but ordinary; it was only a fish-dinner, and coarsely dressed; here was nothing pompous, nothing curious; plentiful indeed, but plain and homely. Hunger is the best sauce. Christ, though he entered upon his exalted state, *showed himself alive by eating*, not showed himself a prince by feasting. Those that could not content themselves with bread and fish, unless they had sauce and wine, would scarcely have found in their hearts to dine with Christ himself here. (2.) Christ himself began. Though, perhaps, having a glorified body, he needed not to eat, yet he would show that he had a true body, which was capable of eating. The apostles produced this as one proof of his resurrection, that *they had eaten and drank with him*, Acts x. 41. (3.) He gave the meat about to all his guests. He not only provided it for them, and invited them to it, but he himself divided it among them, and put it into their hands. Thus to him we owe the application, as well as the purchase, of the benefits of redemption. He gives us power to eat of them.

The evangelist leaves them at dinner, and makes this remark (v. 14): *This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself alive to his disciples*, or the greater part of them. *This is the third day*; so some. On the day he rose he appeared five times; the second day was that day seven-night; and this was the third. Or this was his third appearance to any considerable number of his disciples together; though he had appeared to Mary, to the women, to the two disciples, and to Cephas, yet he had but twice before this appeared to any company of them together. This is taken notice of, [1.] For confirming the truth of his resurrection; the vision was doubled, was trebled, for the thing was certain. Those who believed not the first sign would be brought to believe the voice of the latter signs. [2.] As an instance of Christ's continued kindness to his disciples; once, and again, and a third time, he visited them. It is good to keep account of Christ's gracious visits; for he keeps account of them, and they will be remembered against us if we walk unworthily of them, as they were against Solomon, when he was reminded that the Lord God of Israel had appeared unto him twice. *This is now the third*; have we



made a due improvement of the *first and second*? See 2 Cor. xii. 14. *This is the third*, perhaps it may be the last.

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

We have here Christ's discourse with Peter after dinner, so much of it as relates to himself, in which,

I. He examines his love to him, and gives him a charge concerning his flock, v. 15—17. Observe,

1. When Christ entered into this discourse with Peter.—It was after they had dined: they had all eaten, and were filled, and, it is probable, were entertained with such edifying discourse as our Lord Jesus used to make his table-talk. Christ foresaw that what he had to say to Peter would give him some uneasiness, and therefore would not say it till they had dined, because he would not spoil his dinner. Peter was conscious to himself that he had incurred his Master's displeasure, and could expect no other than to be upbraided with his treachery and ingratitude. "Was this thy kindness to thy friend? Did not I tell thee what a coward thou wouldest prove?" Nay, he might justly expect to be struck out of the roll of the disciples, and to be expelled the sacred college. Twice, if not thrice, he had seen

his Master since his resurrection, and he said not a word to him of it. We may suppose Peter full of doubts upon what terms he stood with his Master; sometimes hoping the best, because he had received favours from him in common with the rest; yet not without some fears, lest the chiding would come at last that would pay for all. But now, at length, his Master put him out of his pain, said what he had to say to him, and confirmed him in his place as an apostle. He did not tell him of his fault hastily, but deferred it for some time; did not tell him of it unseasonably, to disturb the company at dinner, but *when they had dined* together, in token of reconciliation, then discoursed he with him about it, not as with a criminal, but as with a friend. Peter had reproached himself for it, and therefore Christ did not reproach him for it, nor tell him of it directly, but only by a tacit intimation; and, being satisfied in his sincerity, the offence was not only forgiven, but forgotten; and Christ let him know that he was as dear to him as ever. Herein he has given us an encouraging instance of his tenderness towards penitents, and has taught us, in like manner, to restore such as are fallen with a spirit of meekness.

2. What was the discourse itself. Here was the same question three times asked, the same answer three times returned, and the same reply three times given, with very little variation, and yet no *vain repetition*. The same thing was repeated by our Saviour, in speaking it, the more to affect Peter, and the other disciples that were present; it is repeated by the evangelist, in writing it, the more to affect us, and all that read it.

(1.) Three times Christ asks Peter whether he loves him or no. The first time the question is, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?* Observe,

[1.] How he calls him: *Simon, son of Jonas*. He speaks to him by name, the more to affect him, as Luke xxii. 31. *Simon, Simon*. He does not call him *Cephas*, nor *Peter*, the name he had given him (for he had lost the credit of his strength and stability, which those names signified), but his original name, *Simon*. Yet he gives him no hard language, does not call him out of his name, though he deserved it; but as he had called him when he pronounced him blessed, *Simon Bar-jona*, Matt. xvi. 17. He calls him *son of Jonas* (or *John* or *Johanen*) to remind him of his extraction, how mean it was, and unworthy the honour to which he was advanced.

[2.] How he catechises him: *Lovest thou me more than these?*

*First, Lovest thou me?* If we would try whether we are Christ's disciples indeed, this must be the enquiry, Do we love him? But there was a special reason why Christ put it now to Peter. 1. His fall had given occasion to doubt of his love: "Peter, I have cause to suspect thy love; for if thou hadst loved me thou wouldest not have been

ashamed and afraid to own me in my sufferings. How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart was not with me? Note, We must not reckon it an affront to have our sincerity questioned, when we ourselves have done that which makes it questionable; after a shaking fall, we must take heed of settling too soon, lest we settle upon a wrong bottom. The question is affecting; he does not ask, "Dost thou fear me? Dost thou honour me? Dost thou admire me?" but, "Dost thou love me? Give but proof of this, and the affront shall be passed by, and no more said of it." Peter had professed himself a penitent, witness his tears, and his return to the society of the disciples; he was now upon his probation as a penitent; but the question is not, "Simon, how much hast thou wept? how often hast thou fasted, and afflicted thy soul?" but, Dost thou love me? It is this that will make the other expressions of repentance acceptable. The great thing Christ eyes in penitents is their eyeing him in their repentance. *Much is forgiven her*, not because *she wept much*, but because *she loved much*. 2. His function would give occasion for the exercise of his love. Before Christ would commit his sheep to his care, he asked him, *Lovest thou me?* Christ has such a tender regard to his flock that he will not trust it with any but those that love him, and therefore will love all that are his for his sake. Those that do not truly love Christ will never truly love the souls of men, nor will naturally care for their state as they should; nor will that minister love his work that does not love his Master. Nothing but the love of Christ will constrain ministers to go cheerfully through the difficulties and discouragements they meet with in their work, 2 Cor. v. 13, 14. But this love will make their work easy, and them in good earnest in it.

*Secondly, Lovest thou me more than these?* πλείον τούτων. 1. "Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these, more than thou lovest these persons? Dost thou love me more than thou dost James or John, thy intimate friends, or Andrew, thy own brother and companion: Those do not love Christ aright that do not love him better than the best friend they have in the world, and make it to appear whenever they stand in comparison or in competition. Or, "more than thou lovest these things, these boats and nets—more than all the pleasure of fishing, which some make a recreation of—more than the gain of fishing, which others make a calling of." Those only love Christ indeed that love him better than all the delights of sense and all the profits of this world. "Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these occupations thou art now employed in? If so, leave them, to employ thyself wholly in feeding my flock." So Dr. Whitby. 2. "Lovest thou me more than these love me, more than any of the rest of the disciples love me? And then the question is intended to

upbraid him with his vain-glorious boast, *Though all men should deny thee, yet will not I*. "Art thou still of the same mind?" Or, to intimate to him that he had now more reason to love him than any of them had, for more had been forgiven to him than to any of them, as much as his sin in denying Christ was greater than theirs in forsaking him. *Tell me therefore which of them will love him most?* Luke vii. 42. Note, We should all study to excel in our love to Christ. It is no breach of the peace to strive which shall love Christ best; nor any breach of good manners to go before others in this love.

*Thirdly, The second and third time that Christ put this question,* 1. He left out the comparison *more than these*, because Peter, in his answer, modestly left it out, not willing to compare himself with his brethren, much less to prefer himself before them. Though we cannot say, *We love Christ more than others do*, yet we shall be accepted if we can say, *We love him indeed*. 2. In the last he altered the word, as it is in the original. In the first two enquiries, the original word is *ἀγαπᾷ με*—*Dost thou retain a kindness for me?* In answer to which Peter uses another word, more emphatic, *φιλῶ σε*—*I love thee dearly*. In putting the question the last time, Christ uses that word: And dost thou indeed love me dearly?

(2.) Three times Peter returns the same answer to Christ: *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee*. Observe, [1.] Peter does not pretend to love Christ more than the rest of the disciples did. He is now ashamed of that rash word of his, *Though all men deny thee, yet will not I*; and he had reason to be ashamed of it. Note, Though we must aim to be better than others, yet we must, *in lowliness of mind, esteem others better than ourselves*; for we know more evil of ourselves than we do of any of our brethren. [2.] Yet he professes again and again that he loves Christ: *Yea, Lord, surely I love thee*; I were unworthy to live if I did not." He had a high esteem and value for him, a grateful sense of his kindness, and was entirely devoted to his honour and interest; his desire was towards him, as one he was undone with out; and his delight in him, as one he should be unspeakably happy in. This amounts to a profession of repentance for his sin, for it grieves us to have affronted one we love; and to a promise of adherence to him for the future: *Lord, I love thee, and will never leave thee*. Christ *prayed that his faith might not fail* (Luke xxii. 32), and, because his faith did not fail, his love did not; for faith will work by love. Peter had forfeited his claim of relation to Christ. He was now to be re-admitted, upon his repentance. Christ puts his trial upon this issue: *Dost thou love me?* And Peter joins issue upon it: *Lord, I love thee*. Note, Those who can truly say, through grace, that they love Jesus Christ, may take the comfort of their interest in him, notwith-



standing their daily infirmities. [3.] He appeals to Christ himself for the proof of it: *Thou knowest that I love thee; and the third time yet more emphatically: Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* He does not vouch his fellow-disciples to witness for him—they might be deceived in him; nor does he think his own word might be taken—the credit of that was destroyed already; but he calls Christ himself to witness, *First*, Peter was sure that Christ knew all things, and particularly that he knew the heart, and was a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of it*, ch. xvi. 30. *Secondly*, Peter was satisfied of this, that Christ, who knew all things, knew the sincerity of his love to him, and would be ready to attest it in his favour. It is a terror to a hypocrite to think that Christ knows all things; for the divine omniscience will be a witness against him. But it is a comfort to a sincere Christian that he has that to appeal to: *My witness is in heaven, my record is on high.* Christ knows us better than we know ourselves. Though we know not our own uprightness, he knows it. [4.] *He was grieved* when Christ asked him the *third time, Lovest thou me?* v. 17. *First*, Because it put him in mind of his threefold denial of Christ, and was plainly designed to do so; and *when he thought thereon he wept.* Every remembrance of past sins, even pardoned sins, renews the sorrow of a true penitent. *Thou shalt be ashamed, when I am pacified towards thee.* *Secondly*, Because it put him in fear lest his Master foresaw some further miscarriage of his, which would be as great a contradiction to his profession of love to him as the former was. “Surely,” thinks Peter, “my Master would not thus put me upon the rack if he did not see some cause for it. What would become of me if I should be again tempted?” Godly sorrow works carefulness and fear, 2 Cor. vii. 11.

(3.) Three times Christ committed the care of his flock to Peter: *Feed my lambs; feed my sheep; feed my sheep.* [1.] Those whom Christ committed to Peter's care were his lambs and his sheep. The church of Christ is his flock, *which he hath purchased with his own blood* (Acts xx. 28), and he is the *chief shepherd* of it. In this flock some are lambs, young and tender and weak, others are sheep, grown to some strength and maturity. The Shepherd here takes care of both, and of the lambs first, for upon all occasions he showed a particular tenderness for them. *He gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom.* Isa. xl. 11. [2.] The charge he gives him concerning them is to feed them. The word used in v. 15, 17, is *βόσκει*, which strictly signifies to *give them food*; but the word used in v. 16 is *ποιμαίνε*, which signifies more largely to do all the offices of a shepherd to them: “*Feed the lambs with that which is proper for them, and the sheep likewise with food convenient.* The *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, seek and feed them,

and the *other sheep* also which are not of *this fold.*” Note, It is the duty of all Christ's ministers to feed his lambs and sheep. *Feed them*, that is, teach them; for the doctrine of the gospel is spiritual food. *Feed them*, that is, “Lead them to the green pastures, presiding in their religious assemblies, and ministering all the ordinances to them. Feed them by personal application to their respective state and case; not only lay meat before them, but feed those with it that are wilful and will not, or weak and cannot feed themselves.” *When Christ ascended on high, he gave pastors*, left his flock with those that loved him, and would take care of them for his sake. [3.] But why did he give this charge particularly to Peter? Ask the advocates for the pope's supremacy, and they will tell you that Christ hereby designed to give to Peter, and therefore to his successors, and therefore to the bishops of Rome, an absolute dominion and headship over the whole Christian church; as if a charge to serve the sheep gave a power to lord it over all the shepherds; whereas, it is plain, Peter himself never claimed such a power, nor did the other disciples ever own it in him. This charge given to Peter to preach the gospel is by a strange artifice made to support the usurpation of his pretended successors, that fleece the sheep, and, instead of feeding them, feed upon them. But the particular application to Peter here was designed, *First*, To restore him to his apostleship, now that he repented of his abjuration of it, and to renew his commission, both for his own satisfaction, and for the satisfaction of his brethren. A commission given to one convicted of a crime is supposed to amount to a pardon; no doubt, this commission given to Peter was an evidence that Christ was reconciled to him, else he would never have reposed such a confidence in him. Of some that have deceived us we say, “Though we forgive them, we will never trust them;” but Christ, when he forgave Peter, trusted him with the most valuable treasure he had on earth. *Secondly*, It was designed to quicken him to a diligent discharge of his office as an apostle. Peter was a man of a bold and zealous spirit, always forward to speak and act, and, lest he should be tempted to take upon him the directing of the shepherds, he is charged to feed the sheep, as he himself charges all the presbyters to do, and not to *lord it over God's heritage*, 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. If he will be doing, let him do this, and pretend no further. *Thirdly*, What Christ said to him he said to all his disciples; he charged them all, not only to be fishers of men (though that was said to Peter, Luke v. 10), by the conversion of sinners, but feeders of the flock, by the edification of saints.

II. Christ, having thus appointed Peter his doing work, next appoints him his suffering work. Having confirmed to him the honour of an apostle, he now tells him of



further preferment designed him—the honour of a martyr. Observe,

1. How his martyrdom is foretold (v. 18): *Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, being compelled to it, and another shall gird thee* (as a prisoner that is pinioned) *and carry thee whither naturally thou wouldest not.*

(1.) He prefaces the notice he gives to Peter of his sufferings with a solemn asseveration, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee.* It was not spoken of as a thing probable, which perhaps might happen, but as a thing certain, *I say it to thee.* “Others, perhaps, will say to thee, as thou didst to me, *This shall not be unto thee*; but I say it shall.” As Christ foresaw all his own sufferings, so he foresaw the sufferings of all his followers, and foretold them, though not in particular, as to Peter, yet in general, that they must take up their cross. Having charged him to feed his sheep, he bids him not to expect ease and honour in it, but trouble and persecution, and to suffer ill for doing well.

(2.) He foretels particularly that he should die a violent death, by the hands of an executioner. The stretching out of his hands, some think, points at the manner of his death by crucifying; and the tradition of the ancients, if we may rely upon that, informs us that Peter was crucified at Rome under Nero, A. D. 68, or, as others say, 79. Others think it points at the bonds and imprisonments which those are hampered with that are sentenced to death. The pomp and solemnity of an execution add much to the terror of death, and to an eye of sense make it look doubly formidable. Death, in these horrid shapes, has often been the lot of Christ's faithful ones, who yet have overcome it by the blood of the Lamb. This prediction, though pointing chiefly at his death, was to have its accomplishment in his previous sufferings. It began to be fulfilled presently, when he was imprisoned, Acts iv. 3; v. 18; xii. 4. No more is implied here in his being carried whither he would not than that it was a violent death that he should be carried to, such a death as even innocent nature could not think of without dread, nor approach without some reluctance. He that puts on the Christian does not put off the man. Christ himself prayed against the bitter cup. A natural aversion to pain and death is well reconcileable with a holy submission to the will of God in both. Blessed Paul, though longing to be unloaded, owns he cannot desire to be unclothed, 2 Cor. v. 4.

(3.) He compares this with his former liberty. “Time was when thou knewest not any of these hardships, *thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest.*” Where trouble comes we are apt to aggravate it with this, that it has been otherwise; and to fret the more at the grievances of restraint, sickness, and poverty, because we have known the sweets of liberty, health, and plenty, Job xxix. 2; Ps xlii. 4. But we may turn it the

other way, and reason thus with ourselves: “How many years of prosperity have I enjoyed more than I deserved and improved? And, having received good, shall I not receive evil also? See here, [1.] What a change may possibly be made with us, as to our condition in this world! Those that have girded themselves with strength and honour, and indulged themselves in the greatest liberties, perhaps levities, may be reduced to such circumstances as are the reverse of all this. See 1 Sam. ii. 5. [2.] What a change is presently made with those that leave all to follow Christ! They must no longer gird themselves, but he must gird them! and must no longer walk whither they will, but whither he will. [3.] What a change will certainly be made with us if we should live to be old! Those who, when they were young, had strength of body and vigour of mind, and could easily go through business and hardship, and take the pleasures they had a mind to, when they shall be old, will find their strength gone, like Samson, when his hair was cut and he could not shake himself as at other times.

(4.) Christ tells Peter he should suffer thus in his old age. [1.] Though he should be old, and in the course of nature not likely to live long, yet his enemies would hasten him out of the world violently when he was about to retire out of it peaceably, and would put out his candle when it was almost burned down to the socket. See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17. [2.] God would shelter him from the rage of his enemies till he should come to be old, that he might be made the fitter for sufferings, and the church might the longer enjoy his services.

2. The explication of this prediction (v. 19), *This spoke he to Peter, signifying by what death he should glorify God*, when he had finished his course. Observe, (1.) That it is not only appointed to all once to die, but it is appointed to each what death he shall die, whether natural or violent, slow or sudden, easy or painful. When Paul speaks of so great a death, he intimates that there are degrees of death; there is one way into the world, but many ways out, and God has determined which way we should go. (2.) That it is the great concern of every good man, whatever death he dies, to glorify God in it; for what is our chief end but this, *to die to the Lord, at the word of the Lord?* When we die patiently, submitting to the will of God,—die cheerfully, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God,—and die usefully, witnessing to the truth and goodness of religion and encouraging others, we glorify God in dying: and this is the earnest expectation and hope of all good Christians, as it was Paul's, that Christ may be magnified in them living and dying, Phil. i. 20. (3.) That the death of the martyrs was in a special manner for the glorifying of God. The truths of God, which they died in the defence of, are hereby confirmed



The grace of God, which carried them with so much constancy through their sufferings, is hereby magnified. And the consolations of God, which have abounded towards them in their sufferings, and his promises, the springs of their consolations; have hereby been recommended to the faith and joy of all the saints. The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church, and the conversion and establishment of thousands. *Precious therefore in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*, as that which honours him; and those who thereby at such an expense honour him he will honour.

3. The word of command he gives him hereupon: *When he had spoken thus*, observing Peter perhaps to look blank upon it, *he saith unto him, Follow me*. Probably he rose from the place where he had sat at dinner, walked off a little, and bade Peter attend him. This word, *Follow me*, was, (1.) A further confirmation of his restoration to his Master's favour, and to his apostleship; for *Follow me* was the first call. (2.) It was an explication of the prediction of his sufferings, which perhaps Peter at first did not fully understand, till Christ gave him that key to it, *Follow me*: "Expect to be treated as I have been, and to tread the same bloody path that I have trodden before thee; for *the disciple is not greater than his Lord*." (3.) It was to excite him to, and encourage him in, faithfulness and diligence in his work as an apostle. He had told him to *feed his sheep*, and let him set his Master before him as an example of pastoral care: "Do as I have done." Let the under-shepherds study to imitate the Chief Shepherd. They had followed Christ while he was here upon earth, and now that he was leaving them he still preaches the same duty to them, though to be performed in another way, *Follow me*; still they must follow the rules he had given them and the example he had set them. And what greater encouragement could they have than this, both in services and in sufferings? [1.] That herein they did follow him, and it was their present honour; who would be ashamed to follow such a leader? [2.] That hereafter they should follow him, and that would be their future happiness; and so it is a repetition of the promise Christ had given Peter (*ch. xiii. 36*), *Thou shalt follow me afterwards*. Those that faithfully follow Christ in grace shall certainly follow him to glory.

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? fol-

low thou me. 23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? 24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

In these verses we have,

I. The conference Christ had with Peter concerning John, the beloved disciple, in which we have,

1. The eye Peter cast upon him (*v. 20*): Peter, in obedience to his Master's orders, followed him, and *turning about*, pleased with the honours his Master now did him, *he sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following* likewise. Observe here, (1.) How John is described. He does not name himself, as thinking his own name not worthy to be preserved in these records; but gives such a description of himself as sufficiently informs us whom he meant, and withal gives us a reason why he followed Christ so closely. *He was the disciple whom Jesus loved*, for whom he had a particular kindness above the rest; and therefore you cannot blame him for coveting to be as much as possible within hearing of Christ's gracious words during those few precious minutes with which Christ favoured his disciples. It is probable that mention is here made of John's having *leaned on Jesus's breast* and his enquiring concerning the traitor, which he did at the instigation of Peter (*ch. xiii. 24*), as a reason why Peter made the following enquiry concerning him, to repay him for the former kindness. Then John was in the favourite's place, lying in Christ's bosom, and he improved the opportunity to oblige Peter. And now that Peter was in the favourite's place, called to take a walk with Christ, he thought himself bound in gratitude to put such a question for John as he thought would oblige him, we all being desirous to know things to come. Note, As we have interest at the throne of grace, we should improve it for the benefit of one another. Those that help us by their prayers at one time should be helped by us with ours at another time. This is the *communion of saints*. (2.) What he did: He also followed Jesus, which shows how well he loved his company; where he was there also would this servant of his be. When Christ called Peter to follow him, it looked as if he designed to have some private talk with him; but such

an affection John had to his Master that he would rather do a thing that seemed rude than lose the benefit of any of Christ's discourse. What Christ said to Peter he took as said to himself; for that word of command, *Follow me*, was given to all the disciples. At least he desired to have fellowship with those that had fellowship with Christ, and to accompany those that attended him. The bringing of one to follow Christ should engage others. *Draw me and we will run after thee*, Cant. i. 4. (3.) The notice Peter took of it: *He, turning about, seeth him*. This may be looked upon either, [1.] As a culpable diversion from following his Master; he should have been wholly intent upon that, and have waited to hear what Christ had further to say to him, and then was he looking about him to see who followed. Note, The best men find it hard to *attend upon the Lord without distraction*, hard to keep their minds so closely fixed as they should be in following Christ: and a needless and unseasonable regard to our brethren often diverts us from communion with God. Or, [2.] As a laudable concern for his fellow-disciples. He was not so elevated with the honour his Master did him, in singling him out from the rest, as to deny a kind look to one that followed. Acts of love to our brethren must go along with actings of faith in Christ.

2. The enquiry Peter made concerning him (v. 21): "*Lord, and what shall this man do?*" Thou hast told me my work—to feed the sheep; and my lot—to be *carried whither I would not*. What shall be his work, and his lot?" Now this may be taken as the language, (1.) Of concern for John, and kindness to him: "Lord, thou showest me a great deal of favour. Here comes thy beloved disciple, who never forfeited thy favour, as I have done; he expects to be taken notice of; hast thou nothing to say to him? Wilt thou not tell how he must be employed, and how he must be honoured?" (2.) Or of uneasiness at what Christ had said to him concerning his sufferings: "Lord, must I alone be *carried whither I would not?* Must I be marked out to be run down, and must this man have no share of the cross?" It is hard to reconcile ourselves to distinguishing sufferings, and the troubles in which we think we stand alone. (3.) Or of curiosity, and a fond desire of knowing things to come, concerning others, as well as himself. It seems, by Christ's answer, there was something amiss in the question. When Christ had given him the charge of such a treasure, and the notice of such a trial, it had well become him to have said, "Lord, and what shall I do then to approve myself faithful to such a trust, in such a trial? *Lord, increase my faith.*" As my day is, let my strength be." But instead of this, [1.] He seems more concerned for another than for himself. So apt are we to be busy in other men's matters,

but negligent in the concerns of our own souls—quick-sighted abroad, but dim-sighted at home—judging others, and prognosticating what they will do, when we have enough to do to *prove our own work, and understand our own way*. [2.] He seems more concerned about events than about duty. John was younger than Peter, and, in the course of nature, likely to survive him: "Lord," says he, "what times shall he be reserved for?" Whereas, if God by his grace enable us to persevere to the end, and finish well, and get safely to heaven, we need not ask, "What shall be the lot of those that shall come after us?" Is it not well if peace and truth be in my days? Scripture-predictions must be eyed for the directing of our consciences, not the satisfying of our curiosity.

3. Christ's reply to this enquiry (v. 22), "*If I will that he tarry till I come*, and do not suffer as thou must, *what is that to thee*. Mind thou thy own duty, the present duty, *follow thou me.*"

(1.) There seems to be here an intimation of Christ's purpose concerning John, in two things:—[1.] That he should not die a violent death, like Peter, but should tarry till Christ himself came by a natural death to fetch him to himself. The most credible of the ancient historians tell us that John was the only one of all the twelve that did not actually die a martyr. He was often in jeopardy, in bonds and banishments; but at length died in his bed in a good old age. Note, *First*, At death Christ comes to us to call us to account; and it concerns us to be ready for his coming. *Secondly*, Though Christ calls out some of his disciples to resist unto blood, yet not all. Though the crown of martyrdom is bright and glorious, yet the beloved disciple comes short of it. [2.] That he should not die till after Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem: so some understand his tarrying till Christ comes. All the other apostles died before that destruction; but John survived it many years. God wisely so ordered it that one of the apostles should live so long as to close up the canon of the New Testament, which John did solemnly (Rev. xxii. 18), and to obviate the design of the enemy that sowed tares even before the servants fell asleep. John lived to confront Ebion, and Cerinthus, and other heretics, who rose betimes, *speaking perverse things*.

(2.) Others think that it is only a rebuke to Peter's curiosity, and that his tarrying till Christ's second coming is only the supposition of an absurdity: "Wherefore askest thou after that which is foreign and secret? Suppose I should design that John should never die, what does that concern thee? It is nothing to thee, when, or where, or how, John must die. I have told thee how thou must die for thy part; it is enough for thee to know that, *Follow thou me.*" Note, It is the will of Christ that his disciples should mind their own present duty, and not be cu-



ous in their enquiries about future events, concerning either themselves or others. [1.] There are many things we are apt to be solicitous about that are nothing to us. Other people's characters are nothing to us; it is out of our line to judge them, Rom. xiv. 4. Whatsoever they are, saith Paul, it makes no matter to me. Other people's affairs are nothing to us to intermeddle in; we must quietly work, and mind our own business. Many nice and curious questions are put by the scribes and disputers of this world concerning the counsels of God, and the state of the invisible world, concerning which we may say, *What is this to us?* What do you think will become of such and such? is a common question, which may easily be answered with another: *What is that to me?* To his own Master he stands or falls. What is it to us to know the times and the seasons? Secret things belong not to us. [2.] The great thing that is all in all to us is duty, and not event; for duty is ours, events are God's—our own duty, and not another's; for every one shall bear his own burden—our present duty, and not the duty of the time to come; for sufficient to the day shall be the directions thereof: a *goodman's steps are ordered by the Lord*, (Ps. xxxvii. 23); he is guided step by step. Now all our duty is summed up in this one of following Christ. We must attend his motions, and accommodate ourselves to them, follow him to do him honour, as the servant his master; we must walk in the way in which he walked, and aim to be where he is. And, if we will closely attend to the duty of following Christ, we shall find neither heart nor time to meddle with that which does not belong to us.

4. The mistake which arose from this saying of Christ, that *that disciple should not die*, but abide with the church to the end of time; together with the suppressing of this motion by a repetition of Christ's words, v. 23. Observe here,

(1.) The easy rise of a mistake, in the church by misconstruing the sayings of Christ, and turning a supposition to a position. Because John must not die a martyr, they conclude he must not die at all.

[1.] They were inclined to expect it because they could not choose but desire it. *Quod volumus facile credimus—We easily believe what we wish to be true.* For John to abide in the flesh when the rest were gone, and to continue in the world till Christ's second coming, they think, will be a great blessing to the church, which in every age might have recourse to him as an oracle. When they must lose Christ's bodily presence, they hope they shall have that of his beloved disciple; as if that must supply the want of his, forgetting that the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, was to do that. Note, We are apt to dote too much on men and means instruments and external helps, and to think we are happy if we may but have them

always with us; whereas God will change his workmen, and yet carry on his work, that the *excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men.* There is no need of immortal ministers to be the guides of the church, while it is under the conduct of an eternal Spirit.

[2.] Perhaps they were confirmed in their expectations when they now found that John survived all the rest of the apostles. Because he lived long, they were ready to think he should live always; whereas *that which waxeth old is ready to vanish away*, Heb. viii. 13.

[3.] However, it took rise from a saying of Christ's, misunderstood, and then made a saying of the church. Hence learn, *First*, The uncertainty of human tradition, and the folly of building our faith upon it. Here was a tradition, an apostolical tradition, a saying that *went abroad among the brethren.* It was early; it was common; it was public; and yet it was false. How little then are those unwritten traditions to be relied upon which the council of Trent hath decreed to be received with a *veneration and pious affection equal to that which is owing to the holy scripture.* Here was a traditional exposition of scripture. No new saying of Christ's advanced, but only a construction put by the brethren upon what he did really say, and yet it was a misconception. Let the scripture be its own interpreter and explain itself, as it is in a great measure its own evidence and proves itself, for it is light. *Secondly*, The aptness of men to misinterpret the sayings of Christ. The grossest errors have sometimes shrouded themselves under the umbrage of incontestable truths; and the scriptures themselves have been wrested by the unlearned and unstable. We must not think it strange if we hear the sayings of Christ misinterpreted, quoted to patronise the errors of antichrist, and the impudent doctrine of transubstantiation—for instance, pretending to build upon that blessed word of Christ, *This is my body.*

(2.) The easy rectifying of such mistakes, by adhering to the word of Christ, and abiding by that. So the evangelist here corrects and controls that saying among the brethren, by repeating the very words of Christ. He did not say that that disciple should not die. Let us not say so then; but he said, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* He said so, and no more. *Add thou not unto his words.* Let the words of Christ speak for themselves, and let no sense be put upon them but what is genuine and natural; and in that let us agree. Note, The best end of men's controversies would be to keep to the express words of scripture, and speak, as well as think, according to that word, Isa. viii. 20. Scripture language is the safest and most proper vehicle of scripture truth: the words which *the Holy Ghost teacheth*, 1 Cor. ii. 13. As the scripture itself, duly attended to, is the



best weapon wherewith to wound all dangerous errors (and therefore deists, Socinians, papists, and enthusiasts do all they can to derogate from the authority of the scripture), so the scripture itself, humbly subscribed to, is the best weapon-salve to heal the wounds that are made by different modes of expression concerning the same truths. Those that cannot agree in the same logic and metaphysics, and the propriety of the same terms of air, and the application of them, may yet agree in the same scripture terms, and then may agree to love one another.

II. We have here the conclusion of this gospel, and with it of the evangelical story, v. 24, 25. This evangelist ends not so abruptly as the other three did, but with a sort of cadency.

1. This gospel concludes with an account of the author or penman of it, connected by a decent transition to that which went before (v. 24): *This is the disciple which testifies of these things* to the present age, and wrote these things for the benefit of posterity, even this same that Peter and his Master had that conference about in the foregoing verses—John the apostle. Observe here, (1.) Those who wrote the history of Christ were not ashamed to put their names to it. John here does in effect subscribe his name. As we are sure who was the author of the first five books of the Old Testament, which were the foundation of that revelation, so we are sure who were the penmen of the four gospels and the Acts, the pentateuch of the New Testament. The record of Christ's life and death is not the report of we know not who, but was drawn up by men of known integrity, who were ready not only to depose it upon oath, but, which was more, to *seal it with their blood*. (2.) Those who wrote the history of Christ wrote upon their own knowledge, not by hearsay, but what they themselves were eye and ear witnesses of. The penman of this history was a disciple, a beloved disciple, one that had leaned on Christ's breast, that had himself heard his sermons and conferences, had seen his miracles, and the proofs of his resurrection. This is he who testifies what he was well assured of. (3.) Those who wrote the history of Christ, as they testified what they had seen, so they wrote what they had first testified. It was published by word of mouth, with the greatest assurance, before it was committed to writing. They testified it in the pulpit, testified it at the bar, solemnly averred it, stedfastly avowed it, not as travellers give an account of their travels, to entertain the company, but as witnesses upon oath give account of what they know in a matter of consequence, with the utmost caution and exactness, to found a verdict upon. What they wrote they wrote as an affidavit, which they would abide by. Their writings are standing testimonies to the world of the truth of Christ's doctrine, and will be testimonies either for us or against

us according as we do or do not receive it. (4.) It was graciously appointed, for the support and benefit of the church, that the history of Christ should be put into writing, that it might with the greater fulness and certainty spread to every place, and last through every age.

2. It concludes with an attestation of the truth of what had been here related: *We know that his testimony is true*. This may be taken either, (1.) As expressing the common sense of mankind in matters of this nature, which is, that the testimony of one who is an eye-witness, is of unspotted reputation, solemnly deposes what he has seen, and puts it into writing; for the greater certainty, is an unexceptionable evidence. *We know*, that is, All the world knows; that the testimony of such a one is valid, and the common faith of mankind requires us to give credit to it, unless we can disprove it; and in other cases verdict and judgment are given upon such testimonies. The truth of the gospel comes confirmed by all the evidence we can rationally desire or expect in a thing of this nature. The matter of fact, that Jesus did preach such doctrines, and work such miracles, and rise from the dead, is proved, beyond contradiction, by such evidence as is always admitted in other cases, and therefore to the satisfaction of all that are impartial; and then let the doctrine recommend itself, and let the miracles prove it to be of God. Or, (2.) As expressing the satisfaction of the churches at that time concerning the truth of what is here related. Some take it for the subscription of the church of Ephesus, others of the angels or ministers of the churches of Asia to this narrative. Not as if an inspired writing needed any attestation from men, or could thence receive any addition to its credibility; but hereby they recommended it to the notice of the churches, as an inspired writing, and declared the satisfaction they received by it. Or, (3.) As expressing the evangelist's own assurance of the truth of what he wrote, like that (*ch. xix. 35*), *He knows that he saith true*. He speaks of himself in the plural number, *We know*, not for majesty-sake, but for modesty-sake, as 1 John i. 1, *That which we have seen*; and 2 Pet. i. 16. Note, The evangelists themselves were entirely satisfied of the truth of what they have testified and transmitted to us. They do not require us to believe what they did not believe themselves; no, they knew that their testimony was true, for they ventured both this life and the other upon it; threw away this life, and depended upon another, on the credit of what they spoke and wrote.

3. It concludes with an *et cetera*, with a reference to many other things, very memorable, said and done by our Lord Jesus, which were well known by many then living, but not thought fit to be recorded for posterity, v. 25. There were many things very remarkable and improvable, which, if they should be written at large, with the several



circumstances of them, even the world itself, that is, all the libraries in it, could not contain the books that might be written. Thus he concludes like an orator, as Paul (Heb. xi. 32), *What shall I more say? For the time would fail me.* If it be asked why the gospels are not larger, why they did not make the New-Testament history as copious and as long as the Old, it may be answered,

(1.) It was not because they had exhausted their subject, and had nothing more to write that was worth writing; no, there were many of Christ's sayings and doings not recorded by any of the evangelists, which yet were worthy to be written in letters of gold. For, [1.] Every thing that Christ said and did was worth our notice, and capable of being improved. He never spoke an idle word, nor did an idle thing; nay, he never spoke nor did any thing mean, or little, or trifling, which is more than can be said of the wisest or best of men. [2.] His miracles were many, very many, of many kinds, and the same often repeated, as occasion offered. Though one true miracle might perhaps suffice to prove a divine commission, yet the repetition of the miracles upon a great variety of persons, in a great variety of cases, and before a great variety of witnesses, helped very much to prove them true miracles. Every new miracle rendered the report of the former the more credible; and the multitude of them renders the whole report incontestable. [3.] The evangelists upon several occasions give general accounts of Christ's preaching and miracles, inclusive of many particulars, as Matt. iv. 23, 24; ix. 35; xi. 1; xiv. 14, 36; xv. 30; xix. 2; and many others. When we speak of Christ, we have a copious subject before us; the reality exceeds the report, and, after all, *the one half is not told us.* St. Paul quotes one of Christ's sayings, which is not recorded by any of the evangelists (Acts xx. 35), and doubtless there were many more. All his sayings were apophthegms.

(2.) But it was for these three reasons:— [1.] Because it was not needful to write more. This is implied here. There were many other things, which were not written because there was no occasion for writing them. What is written is a sufficient revelation of the doctrine of Christ and the proof of it, and the rest was but to the same purport. Those that argue from this against the sufficiency of the scripture as the rule of our faith and practice, and for the necessity of unwritten traditions, ought to show what there is in the traditions they pretend to perfective of the written word; we are sure there is that which is contrary to it, and therefore reject them. By these therefore *let us be admonished,*

*for of making many books there is no end,* Eccl. xii. 12. If we do not believe and improve what is written, neither should we if there had been much more. [2.] It was not possible to write all. It was possible for the Spirit to indite all, but morally impossible for the penmen to pen all. *The world could not contain the books.* It is a hyperbole common enough and justifiable, when no more is intended than this, that it would fill a vast and incredible number of volumes. It would be such a large and overgrown history as never was; such as would jostle out all other writings, and leave us no room for them. What volumes would be filled with Christ's prayers, had we the record of all those he made, when he *continued all night in prayer to God*, without any vain repetitions? Much more if all his sermons and conferences were particularly related, his miracles, his cures, all his labours, all his sufferings; it would have been an endless thing. [3.] It was not advisable to write much; for *the world*, in a moral sense, *could not contain the books that should be written.* Christ said not what he might have said to his disciples, *because they were not able to bear it*; and for the same reason the evangelists wrote not what they might have written. *The world could not contain, χωρήσαι.* It is the word that is used, ch. viii. 37, "My word *has no place in you.*" They would have been so many that they would have found no room. All people's time would have been spent in reading, and other duties would thereby have been crowded out. Much is overlooked of what is written, much forgotten, and much made the matter of doubtful disputation; this would have been the case much more if there had been such a world of books of equal authority and necessity as the whole history would have swelled to; especially since it was requisite that what was written should be meditated upon and expounded, which God wisely thought fit to leave room for. Parents and ministers, in giving instruction, must consider the capacities of those they teach, and, like Jacob, must take heed of over-driving. Let us be thankful for the books that are written, and not prize them the less for their plainness and brevity, but diligently improve what God has thought fit to reveal, and long to be above, where our capacities shall be so elevated and enlarged that there will be no danger of their being over-loaded.

The evangelist, concluding with *Amen*, thereby sets to his seal, and let us set to ours, an *Amen* of faith, subscribing to the gospel, that it is true, all true; and an *Amen* of satisfaction in what is written, as able to make us wise to salvation. *Amen*; so be it.

AN  
EXPOSITION,  
WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,  
OF THE  
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

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WE have with an abundant satisfaction seen the foundation of our holy religion laid in the history of our blessed Saviour, its great author, which was related and left upon record by four several inspired writers, who all agree in this sacred truth, and the incontestable proofs of it, that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*. Upon this rock the Christian church is built. How it began to be built upon this rock comes next to be related in this book which we have now before us, and of this we have the testimony only of *one witness*; for the matters of fact concerning Christ were much more necessary to be fully related and attested than those concerning the apostles. Had Infinite Wisdom seen fit, we might have had as many books of the Acts of the Apostles as we have gospels, nay, as we might have had gospels: but, for fear of over-burdening the world (John xxi. 25), we have sufficient to answer the end, if we will but make use of it. The history of this book (which was always received as a part of the sacred canon) may be considered,

- I. As looking back to the preceding gospels, giving light to them, and greatly assisting our faith in them. The promises there made we here find made good, particularly the great promises of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and his wonderful operations, both on the apostles (whom here in a few days we find quite other men than what the gospels left them; no longer weak-headed and weak-hearted, but able to say that which then they were not able to bear (John xvi. 12) and bold as lions to face those hardships at the thought of which they then trembled as lambs), and also with the apostles, making the word mighty to the *pulling down of Satan's strong holds*, which had been before comparatively preached in vain. The commission there granted to the apostles we here find executed, and the powers there lodged in them we here find exerted in miracles wrought on the bodies of people—miracles of mercy, restoring sick bodies to health and dead bodies to life—miracles of judgment, striking rebels blind or dead; and much greater miracles wrought on the minds of people, in conferring spiritual gifts upon them, both of understanding and utterance; and this in pursuance of Christ's purposes, and in performance of his promises, which we had in the gospels. The proofs of Christ's resurrection with which the gospels closed are here abundantly corroborated, not only by the constant and undaunted testimony of those that conversed with him after he arose (who had all deserted him, and one of them denied him, and would not otherwise have been rallied again but by his resurrection, but must have been irretrievably dispersed, and yet by that were enabled to own him more resolutely than ever, in defiance of bonds and deaths), but by the working of the Spirit with that testimony for the conversion of multitudes to the faith of Christ, according to the word of Christ, that his resurrection, the sign of the prophet Jonas, which was reserved to the last, should be the most convincing proof of his divine mission. Christ had told his disciples that they should be his witnesses, and this book brings them in witnessing for him,—that they should be *fishers of men*, and here we have them enclosing multitudes in the gospel-net,—that they should be the *lights of the world*, and here we have the world enlightened by them; but that day-spring from on high the first appearing of which we there discerned we here find shining more and more. The *corn of wheat*, which there fell to the ground, here springs up and bears much fruit; the *grain of mustard-seed* there is here a *great tree*; and the *kingdom of heaven*, which was then *at hand*, is here set up. Christ's predictions of the virulent persecutions which the preachers of the gospel should be afflicted with (though one could not have imagined that a doctrine so well worthy of all acceptance should meet with so much opposition) we here find abundantly fulfilled, and also the assurances he gave them of extraordinary supports and comforts under their sufferings. Thus, as the latter part of the history of the Old Testament verifies the promises made to the fathers of the former part (as appears by that famous and solemn acknowledgment of Solomon's, which runs like a receipt in full, 1 Kings viii. 56, *There has not failed one word of all his good promises which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant*), so this latter part of the history of the New Testament exactly answers to the word of Christ in the former part of it: and thus they mutually confirm and illustrate each other.
- II. As looking forward to the following epistles, which are an explication of the gospels, which open the mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection. the history of which we had in the gospels. This book introduces them and is a key to them, as the history of David is to David's



## THE ACTS.

psalms. We are members of the Christian church, that *tabernacle of God among men*, and it is our honour and privilege that we are so. Now this book gives us an account of the framing and rearing of that tabernacle. The four gospels showed us how the foundation of that house was laid; this shows us how the superstructure began to be raised. 1. Among the Jews and Samaritans, which we have an account of in the former part of this book. 2. Among the Gentiles, which we have an account of in the latter part: from thence, and downward to our own day, we find the Christian church subsisting in a visible profession of faith in Christ, as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, made by his baptized disciples, incorporated into religious societies, stately meeting in religious assemblies, attending on the apostles' doctrine, and joining in prayers and the breaking of bread, under the guidance and presidency of men that gave themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word, and in a spiritual communion with all in every place that do likewise. Such a body as this there is now in the world, which we belong to: and, to our great satisfaction and honour, in this book we find the rise and origin of it, vastly different from the Jewish church, and erected upon its ruins; but undeniably appearing to be of God, and not of man. With what confidence and comfort may we proceed in, and adhere to, our Christian profession, as far as we find it agrees with this *pattern in the mount*, to which we ought religiously to conform and confine ourselves!

Two things more are to be observed concerning this book:—(1.) The penman of it. It was written by Luke, who wrote the third of the four gospels, which bears his name; and who (as the learned Dr. Whitby shows) was, very probably, one of the seventy disciples, whose commission (Luke x. 1, &c.) was little inferior to that of the twelve apostles. This Luke was very much a companion of Paul in his services and sufferings. *Only Luke is with me*, 2 Tim. iv. 11. We may know by his style in the latter part of this book when and where he was with him, for then he writes, *We did so and so*, as *ch. xvi. 10; xx. 6*; and thenceforward to the end of the book. He was with Paul in his dangerous voyage to Rome, when he was carried thither a prisoner, was with him when from his prison there he wrote his epistles to the Colossians and Philemon, in both which he is named. And it should seem that St. Luke wrote this history when he was with St. Paul at Rome, during his imprisonment there, and was assistant to him; for the history concludes with St. Paul's preaching there in his *own hired house*. (2.) The title of it: *The Acts of the Apostles*; of the *holy Apostles*, so the Greek copies generally read it, and so they are called, Rev. xviii. 20, *Rejoice over her you holy apostles*. One copy inscribes it, *The Acts of the Apostles by Luke the Evangelist*. [1.] It is the history of the apostles; yet there is in it the history of Stephen, Barnabas, and some other apostolical men, who, though not of the twelve, were endued with the same Spirit, and employed in the same work; and, of those that were apostles, it is the history of Peter and Paul only that is here recorded (and Paul was now of the twelve), Peter the apostle of the circumcision, and Paul the apostle of the Gentiles, Gal. ii. 7. But this suffices as a specimen of what the rest did in other places, pursuant to their commission, for there were none of them idle; and as we are to think what is related in the gospels concerning Christ sufficient, because Infinite Wisdom thought so, the same we are to think here concerning what is related of the apostles and their labours; for what more is told us from tradition of the labours and sufferings of the apostles, and the churches they planted, is altogether doubtful and uncertain, and what I think we cannot build upon with any satisfaction at all. This is *gold, silver, and precious stones*, built upon the *foundation*: that is *wood, hay, and stubble*. [2.] It is called their *acts*, or *doings*; *Gesta apostolorum*; so some. Πράξεις—their practices of the lessons their Master had taught them. The apostles were active men; and though the wonders they did were by the word, yet they are fitly called *their acts*; they spoke, or rather the Spirit by them *spoke, and it was done*. The history is filled with their sermons and their sufferings; yet so much did they labour in their preaching, and so voluntarily did they expose themselves to sufferings, and such were their achievements by both, that they may very well be called their *acts*.

### CHAP. I.

The inspired historian begins his narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, I. With a reference to, and a brief recapitulation of, his gospel, or history of the life of Christ, inscribing this, as he had done that, to his friend Theophilus, ver. 1, 2. II. With a summary of the proofs of Christ's resurrection, his conference with his disciples, and the instructions he gave them during the forty days of his continuance on earth, ver. 3–5. III. With a particular narrative of Christ's ascension into heaven, his disciples' discourse with him before he ascended, and the angels' discourse with them after he ascended, ver. 6–11. IV. With a general idea of the embryo of the Christian church, and its state from Christ's ascension to the pouring out of the Spirit, ver. 12–14. V. With a particular account of the filling up of the vacancy that was made in the sacred college by the death of Judas, by the electing of Matthias in his room, ver. 15–26.

**T**HE former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 Until the day in which he was taken up,

after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 3 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: 4 And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which *saith he*, ye have heard of me. 5



For John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

In these verses, I. Theophilus is put in mind, and we in him, of St. Luke's gospel, which it will be of use for us to cast an eye upon before we enter upon the study of this book, that we may not only see how this begins where that breaks off, but that, *as in water face answers to face*, so do the acts of the apostles to the acts of their Master, the acts of his grace.

1. His patron, to whom he dedicates this book (I should rather say his *pupil*, for he designs, in dedicating it to him, to instruct and direct him, and not to crave his countenance or protection), is Theophilus, v. 1. In the epistle dedicatory before his gospel, he had called him *most excellent Theophilus*; here he calls him no more than *O Theophilus*; not that he had lost his excellency, nor that it was diminished and become less illustrious; but perhaps he had now quitted his place, whatever it was, for the sake of which that title was given him,—or he was now grown into years, and despised such titles of respect more than he had done,—or Luke was grown more intimate with him, and therefore could address him with the more freedom. It was usual with the ancients, both Christian and heathen writers, thus to inscribe their writings to some particular persons. But the directing some of the books of the scripture so is an intimation to each of us to receive them as if directed to us in particular, to us by name; for *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*.

2. His gospel is here called the *former treatise which he had made*, which he had an eye to in writing this, intending this for a continuation and confirmation of that, *τὸν πρῶτον λόγον*—the *former word*. What is written of the gospel is the word as truly as what was spoken; nay, we now know no unwritten word that we are to give credit to, but as it agrees with that which is written. He made the former treatise, and now is divinely inspired to make this, for Christ's scholars must *go on towards perfection*, Heb. vi. 1. And therefore their guides must help them on, *must still teach the people knowledge* (Eccl. xii. 9), and not think that their former labours, though ever so good, will excuse them from further labours; but they should rather be quickened and encouraged by them, as St. Luke here, who, because he had laid the foundation in a former treatise, will build upon it in this. Let not this therefore drive out that; let not new sermons and new books make us forget old ones, but put us in mind of them, and help us to improve them.

3. The contents of his gospel were *that, all that, which Jesus began both to do and teach*; and the same is the subject of the writings of the other three evangelists. Observe, (1.) Christ both did and taught. The doctrine

he taught was confirmed by the miraculous works he did, which proved him *a teacher come from God* (John iii. 2); and the duties he taught were copied out in the holy gracious works he did, for he hath *left us an example*, and that such as proves him *a teacher come from God too*, for *by their fruits you shall know them*. Those are the best ministers that both do and teach, whose lives are a constant sermon. (2.) *He began both to do and teach*; he laid the foundation of all that was to be taught and done in the Christian church. His apostles were to carry on and continue what he began, and to do and teach the same things. Christ set them in, and then left them to go on, but sent his Spirit to empower them both to do and teach. It is a comfort to those who are endeavouring to carry on the work of the gospel that Christ himself began it. The great salvation *at the first began to be spoken by the Lord*, Heb. ii. 3. (3.) The four evangelists, and Luke particularly, have handed down to us *all that Jesus began both to do and to teach*; not all the particulars—the world could not have contained them; but all the heads, samples of all, so many, and in such variety, that by them we may judge of the rest. We have the beginnings of his doctrine (Matt. iv. 17), and the beginnings of his miracles, John ii. 11. Luke had spoken, had treated, of all Christ's sayings and doings, had given us a general idea of them, though he had not recorded each in particular.

4. The period of the evangelical story is *fixed to the day in which he was taken up*, v. 2. Then it was that he left this world, and his bodily presence was no more in it. St. Mark's gospel concludes with *the Lord's being received up into heaven* (Mark xvi. 19), and so does St. Luke's, Luke xxiv. 51. Christ continued doing and teaching to the last, *till he was taken up* to the other work he had to do within the veil.

II. The truth of Christ's resurrection is maintained and evidenced, v. 3. That part of what was related in the *former treatise* was so material that it was necessary to be upon all occasions repeated. The great evidence of his resurrection was that *he showed himself alive to his apostles*; being alive, he showed himself so, and *he was seen of them*. They were honest men, and one may depend upon their testimony; but the question is whether they were not imposed upon, as many a well-meaning man is. No, they were not; for, 1. The proofs were infallible, *τεκμήρια*—*plain indications*, both that he was *alive* (he walked and talked with them, he ate and drank with them) and that *it was he himself, and not another*; for he showed them again and again the marks of the wounds *in his hands, and feet, and side*, which was the utmost proof the thing was capable of or required. 2. They were many, and often repeated: *He was seen by them forty days*, not constantly residing with them, but frequently



appearing to them, and bringing them by degrees to be fully satisfied concerning it, so that all their sorrow for his departure was done away by it. Christ's staying upon earth so long after he had entered upon his state of exaltation and glory, to confirm the faith of his disciples and comfort their hearts, was such an instance of condescension and compassion to believers as may fully assure us that *we have a high priest that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.*

III. A general hint given of the instructions he furnished his disciples with, now that he was about to leave them, and they, since *he breathed on them and opened their understandings*, were better able to receive them. 1. He instructed them concerning the work they were to do: *He gave commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen.* Note, Christ's choice is always attended with his charge. Those whom he elected into the apostleship expected he should give them preferences, instead of which *he gave them commandments.* When he took his journey, and gave authority to his servants, and to every one his work (Mark xiii. 34), *he gave them commandments through the Holy Ghost*, which he was himself filled with as Mediator, and which he had breathed into them. In giving them the Holy Ghost, he gave them his commandments; for the Comforter will be a commander; and his office was *to bring to their remembrance what Christ had said.* *He charged those that were apostles by the Holy Ghost*; so the words are placed. It was their receiving the Holy Ghost that sealed their commission, John xx. 22. He was not taken up till after he had given them their charge, and so finished his work. 2. He instructed them concerning the doctrine they were to preach: *He spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* He had given them a general idea of that kingdom, and the certain time it should be set up in the world (in his parable, Mark xiii.), but here he instructed them more in the nature of it, as a kingdom of grace in this world and of glory in the other, and opened to them that covenant which is the great charter by which it is incorporated. Now this was intended, (1.) To prepare them to receive the Holy Ghost, and to go through that which they were designed for. He tells them in secret what they must tell the world; and they shall find that the Spirit of truth, when he comes, will say the same. (2.) To be one of the proofs of Christ's resurrection; so it comes in here; the disciples, to whom *he showed himself alive*, knew that it was he, not only by what he showed them, but by what he said to them. None but he could speak thus clearly, thus fully, *of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* He did not entertain them with discourses of politics or the kingdoms of men, of philosophy or the kingdom of nature, but pure divinity and the kingdom of grace, the

things which most nearly concerned them, and those to whom they were sent.

IV. A particular assurance given them that they should now shortly receive the Holy Ghost, with orders given them to expect it (v. 4, 5), *he being assembled together with them*, probably in the interview at the mountain in Galilee which he had appointed before his death; for there is mention of *their coming together again* (v. 6), to attend his ascension. Though he had now ordered them to Galilee, yet they must not think to continue there; no, they must return to Jerusalem, and not depart thence. Observe,

1. The command he gives them to wait. This was to raise their expectations of something great; and something very great they had reason to expect from their exalted Redeemer. (1.) They must wait till the time appointed, which is now *not many days hence.* Those that by faith hope promised mercies will come must with patience wait till they do come, according to *the time, the set time.* And when *the time draws nigh*, as now it did, we must, as Daniel, look earnestly for it, Dan. ix. 3. (2.) They must wait in the place appointed, *in Jerusalem*, for there the Spirit must be first poured out, because Christ was to be as *king upon the holy hill of Zion*; and because *the word of the Lord must go forth from Jerusalem*; this must be the mother-church. There Christ was put to shame, and therefore there he will have this honour done him, and this favour is done to Jerusalem to teach us to forgive our enemies and persecutors. The apostles were more exposed to danger at Jerusalem than they would have been in Galilee; but we may cheerfully trust God with our safety, when we keep in the way of our duty. The apostles were now to put on a public character, and therefore must venture in a public station. Jerusalem was the fittest candlestick for those lights to be set up in.

2. The assurance he gives them that they shall not wait in vain.

(1.) The blessing designed them shall come, and they shall find it was worth waiting for: *You shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost*; that is, [1.] "The Holy Ghost shall be poured out upon you more plentifully than ever." They had already been breathed upon with the Holy Ghost (John xx. 22), and they had found the benefit of it; but now they shall have larger measures of his gifts, graces, and comforts, and *be baptized with them*, in which there seems to be an allusion to those Old-Testament promises of the pouring out of the Spirit, Joel ii. 28; Isa. xlv. 3; xxxii. 15. [2.] "You shall be cleansed and purified by the Holy Ghost," as the priests were baptized and washed with water, when they were consecrated to the sacred function: "They had the sign; you shall have the thing signified. You shall be sanctified by the truth, as the Spirit shall lead you more and more into it, and have you

consciences purged by the witness of the Spirit, that you may serve the living God in the apostleship." [3] "You shall hereby be more effectually than ever engaged to your Master, and to his guidance, as Israel was *baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea*; you shall be tied so fast to Christ that you shall never, for fear of any sufferings, forsake him again, as once you did."

(2.) Now this gift of the Holy Ghost he speaks of,

[1.] *As the promise of the Father, which they had heard of him*, and might therefore depend upon. First, The Spirit was given by promise, and it was at this time the great promise, as that of the Messiah was before (Luke i. 72), and that of eternal life is now, 1 John ii. 25. Temporal good things are given by Providence, but the Spirit and spiritual blessings are given by promise, Gal. iii. 18. The Spirit of God is not given as the spirit of men is given us, and formed within us, by a course of nature (Zech. xii. 1), but by the word of God. 1. That the gift may be the more valuable, Christ thought the promise of the Spirit a legacy worth leaving to his church. 2. That it may be the more sure, and that the heirs of promise may be confident of the immutability of God's counsel herein. 3. That it may be of grace, peculiar grace, and may be received by faith, laying hold on the promise, and depending upon it. As Christ, so the Spirit, is received by faith. Secondly, It was the *promise of the Father*, 1. Of Christ's Father. Christ, as Mediator, had an eye to God as his Father, fathering his design, and owning it all along. 2. Of our Father, who, if he give us the *adoption of sons*, will certainly give us the *Spirit of adoption*, Gal. iv. 5, 6. He will give the Spirit, as the *Father of lights*, as the *Father of spirits*, and as the *Father of mercies*; it is the *promise of the Father*. Thirdly, This promise of the Father they had heard from Christ many a time, especially in the farewell sermon he preached to them a little before he died, wherein he assured them, again and again, that the Comforter should come. This confirms the promise of God, and encourages us to depend upon it, that we have heard it from Jesus Christ; *for in him all the promises of God are yea, and amen*. "You have heard it from me, and I will make it good."

[2.] As the prediction of John Baptist; for so far back Christ here directs them to look (v. 5): "You have not only heard it from me, but you had it from John; when he turned you over to me, he said (Matt. iii. 11), *I indeed baptize you with water, but he that comes after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost*." It is a great honour that Christ now does to John, not only to quote his words, but to make this great gift of the Spirit, now at hand, to be the accomplishment of them. Thus he confirmeth the word of his servants, his messengers, Isa. xlv. 26.

But Christ can do more than any of his ministers. It is an honour to them to be employed in dispensing the means of grace, but it is his prerogative to give the *Spirit of grace*. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, shall teach you by his Spirit, and give his Spirit to make intercession in you, which is more than the best ministers preaching with us.

(3.) Now this gift of the Holy Ghost thus promised, thus prophesied of, thus waited for, is that which we find the apostles received in the next chapter, for in that this promise had its full accomplishment; this was it *that should come*, and we look for no other; for it is here promised to be given *not many days hence*. He does not tell them how many, because they must keep every day in a frame fit to receive it. Other scriptures speak of the *gift of the Holy Ghost* to ordinary believers; this speaks of that particular power which, by the Holy Ghost, the first preachers of the gospel, and planters of the church, were endued with, enabling them infallibly to relate to that age, and record to posterity, the doctrine of Christ, and the proofs of it; so that by virtue of this promise, and the performance of it, we receive the New Testament as of divine inspiration, and venture our souls upon it.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

In Jerusalem Christ, by his angel, had appointed his disciples to meet him in Galilee; there he appointed them to meet him in Jerusalem again, such a day. Thus he would try their obedience, and it was found ready and cheeriul; they came together, as



he appointed them, to be *the witnesses* of his ascension, of which we have here an account. Observe,

I. The question they asked him at this interview. *They came together* to him, as those that had consulted one another about it, and concurred in the question *nemine contradicente—unanimously*; they came in a body, and put it to him as the sense of the house, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* Two ways this may be taken:—

1. "Surely thou wilt not at all restore it to the present rulers of Israel, the chief priests and the elders, that put thee to death, and, to compass that design, tamely gave up the kingdom to Cæsar, and owned themselves his subjects. What! Shall those that hate and persecute thee and us be trusted with power? *This be far from thee.*" Or rather,

2. "Surely thou wilt now restore it to the Jewish nation, as far as it will submit to thee as their king." Now two things were amiss in this question:—

(1.) Their expectation of the thing itself. They thought Christ would *restore the kingdom to Israel*, that is, that he would make the nation of the Jews as great and considerable among the nations as it was in the *days of David and Solomon, of Asa and Jehoshaphat*; that, as Shiloh, he would *restore the sceptre to Judah, and the lawgiver*; whereas Christ came to set up his own kingdom, and that a kingdom of heaven, not to *restore the kingdom to Israel*, an earthly kingdom. See here, [1.] How apt even good men are to place the happiness of the church too much in external pomp and power; as if Israel could not be glorious unless the kingdom were restored to it, nor Christ's disciples honoured unless they were peers of the realm; whereas we are told to expect the cross in this world, and to wait for the kingdom in the other world. [2.] How apt we are to retain what we have imbibed, and how hard it is to get over the prejudices of education. The disciples, having sucked in this notion with their milk that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, were long before they could be brought to have any idea of his kingdom as spiritual. [3.] How naturally we are biased in favour of our own people. They thought God would have no kingdom in the world unless it were *restored to Israel*; whereas the kingdoms of this world were to become his, in whom he would be glorified, whether Israel should sink or swim. [4.] How apt we are to misunderstand scripture—to understand that literally which is spoken figuratively, and to expound scripture by our schemes, whereas we ought to form our schemes by the scriptures. But, *when the Spirit shall be poured out from on high*, our mistakes will be rectified, as the apostles' soon after were.

(2.) Their enquiry concerning the time of

it: "*Lord, wilt thou do it at this time?*" Now that thou hast called us together is it for this purpose, that proper measures may be concerted for the restoring of the kingdom to Israel? Surely there cannot be a more favourable juncture than this." Now herein they missed their mark, [1.] That they were inquisitive into that which their Master had never directed nor encouraged them to enquire into. [2.] That they were impatient for the setting up of that kingdom in which they promised themselves so great a share, and would anticipate the divine counsels. Christ had told them that they should *sit on thrones* (Luke xxii. 30), and now nothing will serve them but they must be in the throne immediately, and cannot stay the time; whereas *he that believeth doth not make haste*, but is satisfied that God's time is the best time.

II. The check which Christ gave to this question, like that which he had a little before given to Peter's enquiry concerning John, *What is that to thee? v. 7. It is not for you to know the times and seasons.* He does not contradict their expectation that the kingdom would be restored to Israel, because that mistake would soon be rectified by the pouring out of the Spirit, after which they never had any more thoughts of the temporal kingdom; and also because there is a sense of the expectation which is true, the setting up of the gospel kingdom in the world; and their mistake of the promise shall not make it of no effect; but he checks their enquiry after the time.

1. The knowledge of this is not allowed to them: *It is not for you to know*, and therefore it is not for you to ask. (1.) Christ is now parting from them, and parts in love; and yet he gives them this rebuke, which is intended for a caution to his church in all ages, to take heed of splitting upon the rock which was fatal to our first parents—an inordinate desire of forbidden knowledge, and intruding into things which we have not seen because God has not shown them. *Nescire velle quæ magister maximus docere non vult, eruditi inscitia est—It is folly to covet to be wise above what is written, and wisdom to be content to be no wiser.* (2.) Christ had given his disciples a great deal of knowledge above others (*to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God*), and had promised them his Spirit, to teach them more; now, lest they should be puffed up with the abundance of the revelations, he here lets them understand that there were some things which it was not for them to know. We shall see how little reason we have to be proud of our knowledge when we consider how many things we are ignorant of. (3.) Christ had given his disciples instructions sufficient for the discharge of their duty, both before his death and since his resurrection, and in this knowledge he will have them to be satisfied; for it is enough for a Christian, in whom vain curiosity is a corrupt humour, to be mortified, and not



gratified. (4.) Christ had himself told his disciples *the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*, and had promised that the Spirit should *show them things to come* concerning it, John xvi. 13. He had likewise given them *signs of the times*, which it was their duty to observe, and a sin to overlook, Matt. xxiv. 33; xvi. 3. But they must not expect nor desire to know either all the particulars of future events or the exact times of them. It is good for us to be kept in the dark, and left at uncertainty concerning *the times and moments* (as Dr. Hammond reads it) of future events concerning the church, as well as concerning ourselves,—concerning all the periods of time and the final period of it, as well as concerning the period of our own time

Prudens futuri temporis exitum  
Caliginosa nocte premit Deus—  
But Jove, in goodness ever wise,  
Hath hid, in clouds of thickest night,  
All that in future prospect lies  
Beyond the ken of mortal sight.—Hos.

As to the times and seasons of the year, we know, in general, there will be summer and winter counterchanged, but we know not particularly which day will be fair or which foul, either in summer or in winter; so, as to our affairs in this world, when it is a summer-time of prosperity, that we may not be secure, we are told there will come a winter-time of trouble; and in that winter, that we may not despond and despair, we are assured that summer will return; but what this or that particular *day will bring forth* we cannot tell, but must accommodate ourselves to it, whatever it is, and make the best of it.

2. The knowledge of it is reserved to God as his prerogative; it is what the *Father hath put in his own power*; it is hid with him. None besides can reveal the times and seasons to come. *Known unto God are all his works*, but not to us, ch. xv. 18. It is in his power, and in his only, *to declare the end from the beginning*; and by this he proves himself to be God, Isa. xlv. 10. "And though he did think fit sometimes to let the Old-Testament prophets know the times and the seasons (as of the Israelites' bondage in Egypt four hundred years, and in Babylon seventy years), yet he has not thought fit to let you know the times and seasons, no not just how long it shall be before Jerusalem be destroyed, though you be so well assured of the thing itself. He hath not said that he will not give you to know something more than you do of the times and seasons;" he did so afterwards to his servant John; "but he has put it in his own power to do it or not, as he thinks fit;" and what is in that New-Testament prophecy discovered concerning the times and the seasons is so dark, and hard to be understood, that, when we come to apply it, it concerns us to remember this word, that it is not for us to be positive in determining the times and the seasons. Buxtorf mentions a saying of the rabbin concerning the coming

of the Messiah: *Rumpatur spiritus eorum qui supputant tempora—Perish the men who calculate the time.*

III. He appoints them their work, and with authority assures them of an ability to go on with it, and of success in it: "*It is not for you to know the times and the seasons*—this would do you no good; but know this (v. 8) that you shall receive a spiritual power, by the *descent of the Holy Ghost upon you*, and shall not receive it in vain, for *you shall be witnesses unto me* and my glory; and your testimony shall not be in vain, for it shall be received here in Jerusalem, in the country about, and all the world over," v. 8. If Christ make us serviceable to his honour in our own day and generation, let this be enough for us, and let not us perplex ourselves about times and seasons to come. Christ here tells them,

1. That their work should be honourable and glorious: *You shall be witnesses unto me.* (1.) They shall proclaim him king, and publish those truths to the world by which his kingdom should be set up, and he would rule. They must openly and solemnly preach his gospel to the world. (2.) They shall prove this, shall confirm their testimony, not as witnesses do, with an oath, but with the divine seal of miracles and supernatural gifts: *You shall be martyrs to me*, or *my martyrs*, as some copies read it; for they attested the truth of the gospel with their sufferings, even unto death.

2. That their power for this work should be sufficient. They had not strength of their own for it, nor wisdom nor courage enough; they were naturally of *the weak and foolish things of the world*; they durst not appear as witnesses for Christ upon his trial, neither as yet were they able. "*But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you*" (so it may be read), "shall be animated and actuated by a better spirit than your own; you shall have power to preach the gospel, and to prove it out of the scriptures of the Old Testament" (which, when they were *filled with the Holy Ghost*, they did to admiration, ch. xviii. 28), "and to confirm it both by miracles and by sufferings." Note, Christ's witnesses shall receive power for that work to which he calls them; those whom he employs in his service he will qualify for it, and will bear them out in it.

3. That their influence should be great and very extensive: "*You shall be witnesses for Christ, and shall carry his cause*," (1.) "*In Jerusalem*; there you must begin, and many there will receive your testimony; and those that do not will be left inexcusable." (2.) "*Your light shall thence shine throughout all Judea, where before you have laboured in vain*." (3.) "*Thence you shall proceed to Samaria, though at your first mission you were forbidden to preach in any of the cities of the Samaritans*." (4.) "*Your use*



fulness shall reach to the uttermost part of the earth, and you shall be blessings to the whole world."

IV. Having left these instructions with them, he leaves them (v. 9): *When he had spoken these things, and had said all that he had to say, he blessed them* (so we were told, Luke xxiv. 50); and *while they beheld him*, and had their eye fixed upon him, receiving his blessing, *he was gradually taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight*. We have here Christ's ascending on high; not fetched away, as Elijah was, with a *chariot of fire and horses of fire*, but rising to heaven, as he rose from the grave, purely by his own power, his body being now, as the bodies of the saints will be at the resurrection, a spiritual body, and raised in power and incorruption. Observe, 1. He began his ascension in the sight of his disciples, even *while they beheld*. They did not see him come up out of the grave, because they might see him after he had risen, which would be satisfaction enough; but they saw him go up towards heaven, and had actually their eye upon him with so much care and earnestness of mind that they could not be deceived. It is probable that he did not fly swiftly up, but moved upwards gently, for the further satisfaction of his disciples. 2. He *vanished out of their sight, in a cloud*, either a thick cloud, for God said that he would *dwell in the thick darkness*; or a bright cloud, to signify the splendour of his glorious body. It was a bright cloud that overshadowed him in his transfiguration, and most probably this was so, Matt. xvii. 5. This *cloud received him*, it is probable, when he had gone about as far from the earth as the clouds generally are; yet it was not such a spreading cloud as we commonly see, but such as just served to enclose him. Now he *made the clouds his chariot*, Ps. civ. 3. God had often come down in a cloud; now he went up in one. Dr. Hammond thinks that the clouds receiving him here were the angels receiving him; for the appearance of angels is ordinarily described by a cloud, comparing Exod. xxv. 22 with Lev. xvi. 2. By the clouds there is a sort of communication kept up between the upper and lower world; in them the vapours are sent up from the earth, and the dews sent down from heaven. Fitly therefore does he ascend in a cloud who is *the Mediator between God and man*, by whom God's mercies come down upon us and our prayers come up to him. This was the last that was seen of him. The eyes of a great many witnesses followed him into the cloud; and, if we would know what became of him then, we may find (Dan. vii. 13), *That one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him in the clouds as he came near before him*.

V The disciples, when he had gone out

of their sight, yet still continued *looking up stedfastly to heaven* (v. 10), and this longer than it was fit they should; and why so?

1. Perhaps they hoped that Christ would presently come back to them again, to restore the kingdom to Israel, and were loth to believe they should now part with him for good and all; so much did they still dote upon his bodily presence, though he had told them that *it was expedient for them that he should go away*. Or, they looked after him, as doubting whether he might not be dropped, as the sons of the prophets thought concerning Elijah (2 Kings ii. 16), and so they might have him again. 2. Perhaps they expected to see some change in the visible heavens now upon Christ's ascension, that either *the sun should be ashamed or the moon confounded* (Isa. xxiv. 23), as being out-shone by his lustre; or, rather, that they should show some sign of joy and triumph; or perhaps they promised themselves a sight of the glory of the invisible heavens, upon their opening to receive him. Christ had told them that hereafter they should *see heaven opened* (John i. 51), and why should not they expect it now?

VI. Two angels appeared to them, and delivered them a seasonable message from God. There was a world of angels ready to receive our Redeemer, now that he made his public entry into *the Jerusalem above*: we may suppose these two loth to be absent then; yet, to show how much Christ had at heart the concerns of his church on earth, he sent back to his disciples two of those that came to meet him, who appear as *two men in white apparel*, bright and glittering; for they know, according to the duty of their place, that they are really serving Christ when they are ministering to his servants on earth. Now we are told what the angels said to them, 1. To check their curiosity: *You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven?* He calls them *men of Galilee*, to put them in mind of *the rock out of which they were hewn*. Christ had put a great honour upon them, in making them his ambassadors; but they must remember that they are men, earthen vessels, and men of Galilee, illiterate men, looked upon with disdain. Now, say they, "*Why stand you here*, like Galileans, rude and unpolished men, *gazing up into heaven?*" What would you see? You have seen all that you were called together to see, and why do you look any further? *Why stand you gazing*, as men frightened and perplexed, as men astonished and at their wits' end?" Christ's disciples should never stand at a gaze, because they have a sure rule to go by, and a sure foundation to build upon. 2. To confirm their faith concerning Christ's second coming. Their Master had often told them of this, and the angels are sent at this time seasonably to put them in mind of it: "*This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into*

heaven, and whom you are looking thus long after, wishing you had him with you again, is not gone for ever; for there is a day appointed in which he will come in like manner thence, as you have seen him go thither, and you must not expect him back till that appointed day.' (1.) "*This same Jesus shall come again in his own person, clothed with a glorious body; this same Jesus, who came once to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, will appear a second time without sin* (Heb. ix. 26, 28), who came once in disgrace to be judged, will come again in glory to judge. *The same Jesus who has given you your charge will come again to call you to an account how you have performed your trust; he, and not another,*" Job xix. 27. (2.) "*He shall come in like manner. He is gone away in a cloud, and attended with angels; and, behold, he comes in the clouds, and with him an innumerable company of angels! He is gone up with a shout and with the sound of a trumpet* (Ps. xlvii. 5), and he will descend from heaven with a shout and with the trump of God, 1 Thess. iv. 16. You have now lost the sight of him in the clouds and in the air; and whither he is gone you cannot follow him now, but shall then, when you shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." When we stand gazing and trifling, the consideration of our Master's second coming should quicken and awaken us; and, when we stand gazing and trembling, the consideration of it should comfort and encourage us.

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

We are here told, I. Whence Christ ascended—from the mount of Olives (v. 12), from that part of it where the town of Bethany stood, Luke xxiv. 50. There he began his sufferings (Luke xxii. 39), and therefore there he rolled away the reproach of them by his glorious ascension, and thus showed that his passion and his ascension had the same reference and tendency. Thus would he enter upon his kingdom in the sight of Jerusalem, and of those undutiful ungrateful citizens of his that would not have him to reign over them. It was prophesied of him (Zech. xiv.

4), *That his feet should stand upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem, should stand last there; and presently it follows, The mount of Olives shall cleave in two. From the mount of Olives he ascended who is the good olive-tree, whence we receive the unction*, Zech. iv. 12; Rom. xi. 24. This mount is here said to be near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey from it, that is, a little way; no further than devout people used to walk out on a sabbath evening, after the public worship was over, for meditation. Some reckon it a thousand paces, others two thousand cubits; some seven furlongs, others eight. Bethany indeed was fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem (John xi. 18), but that part of the mount of Olives which was next to Jerusalem, whence Christ began to ride in triumph, was but seven or eight furlongs off. The Chaldee paraphrast on Ruth i. says, *We are commanded to keep the sabbaths and the holy days, so as not to go above two thousand cubits, which they build upon Josh. iii. 4, where, in their march through Jordan, the space between them and the ark was to be two thousand cubits. God had not then thus limited them, but they limited themselves; and thus far it is a rule to us, not to journey on the sabbath any more than in order to the sabbath work; and as far as is necessary to this we are not only allowed, but enjoined*, 2 Kings iv. 23.

II. Whither the disciples returned: They came to Jerusalem, according to their Master's appointment, though there they were in the midst of enemies; but it should seem that though immediately after Christ's resurrection they were watched, and were in fear of the Jews, yet after it was known that they were gone into Galilee no notice was taken of their return to Jerusalem, nor any further search made for them. God can find out hiding-places for his people in the midst of their enemies, and so influence Saul that he shall not seek for David any more. At Jerusalem they went up into an upper room, and there abode; not that they all lodged and dined together in one room, but there they assembled every day, and spent time together in religious exercises, in expectation of the descent of the Spirit. Divers conjectures the learned have about this upper room. Some think it was one of the upper rooms in the temple; but it cannot be thought that the chief priests, who had the letting of these rooms, would suffer Christ's disciples constantly to reside in any of them. It was said indeed, by the same historian, that they were continually in the temple (Luke xxiv. 53), but that was in the courts of the temple, at the hours of prayer, where they could not be hindered from attending; but, it should seem, this upper room was in a private house. Mr. Gregory, of Oxford, is of this opinion, and quotes a Syriac scholiast upon this place, who says that it was the same upper room in which they had eaten the passover; and though that was called ἀνωγειον, this ὑπερῶνον, both



may signify the same. "Whether," says he, "it was in the house of St. John the evangelist, as Euodius delivered, or that of Mary the mother of John Mark, as others have collected, cannot be certain." Notes, ch. xiii.

III. Who the disciples were, that kept together. The eleven apostles are here named (v. 13), so is Mary the mother of our Lord (v. 14), and it is the last time that ever any mention is made of her in the scriptures. There were others that are here said to be the brethren of our Lord, *his kinsmen according to the flesh*; and, to make up the hundred and twenty spoken of (v. 15), we may suppose that all or most of the seventy disciples were with them, that were associates with the apostles, and were employed as evangelists.

IV. How they spent their time: *They all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.* Observe, 1. *They prayed, and made supplication.* All God's people are praying people, and *give themselves to prayer.* It was now a time of trouble and danger with the disciples of Christ; they were as sheep in the midst of wolves; and, *Is any afflicted? Let him pray*; this will silence cares and fears. They had new work before them, great work, and, before they entered upon it, *they were instant in prayer to God* for his presence with them in it. Before they were first sent forth Christ spent time in prayer for them, and now they spent time in prayer for themselves. They were waiting for the descent of the Spirit upon them, and therefore abounded thus in prayer. The Spirit descended upon our Saviour when he was praying, Luke iii. 21. Those are in the best frame to receive spiritual blessings that are in a praying frame. Christ had promised now shortly to send the Holy Ghost; now this promise was not to supersede prayer, but to quicken and encourage it. God will be enquired of for promised mercies, and the nearer the performance seems to be the more earnest we should be in prayer for it. 2. *They continued in prayer*, spent much time in it, more than ordinary, prayed frequently, and were long in prayer. They never missed an hour of prayer; they resolved to persevere herein till the Holy Ghost came, according to the promise, *to pray, and not to faint.* It is said (Luke xxiv. 53), *They were praising and blessing God*; here, *They continued in prayer and supplication*; for as praise for the promise is a decent way of begging for the performance, and praise for former mercy of begging further mercy, so, in seeking to God, we give him the glory of the mercy and grace which we have found in him. 3. They did this *with one accord.* This intimates that they were together in holy love, and that there was no quarrel nor discord among them; and those who so keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace are best prepared to receive the comforts of the Holy Ghost. It also intimates their worthy concurrence in the supplications that w

made; though but one spoke, they all prayed, and if, when *two agree to ask, it shall be done for them*, much more when many agree in the same petition. See Matt. xviii. 19.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about a hundred and twenty,) 16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19 and it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Acedama, that is to say, The field of blood. 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, *Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein*: and his bishopric let another take. 21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

The sin of Judas was not only his shame and ruin, but it made a vacancy in the college of the apostles. They were ordained twelve, with an eye to the twelve tribes of Israel, descended from the twelve patriarchs; they were the twelve stars that make up the church's crown (Rev. xii. 1), and for them twelve thrones were designated, Matt. xix. 28.

Now being twelve when they were learners, if they were but eleven when they were to be teachers, it would occasion every one to enquire what had become of the twelfth, and so revive the remembrance of the scandal of their society; and therefore care was taken, before the descent of the Spirit, to fill up the vacancy, of the doing of which we now have an account, our Lord Jesus, probably, having given directions about it, among other things which he spoke *pertaining to the kingdom of God*. Observe,

I. The persons concerned in this affair.

1. The house consisted of *about a hundred and twenty*. This was the number of the names, that is, the persons; some think the men only, distinguished from the women. Dr. Lightfoot reckons that the *eleven apostles, the seventy disciples*, and about thirty-nine more, all of Christ's own kindred, country, and concourse, made up this *one hundred and twenty*, and that these were a sort of synod, or congregation of ministers, a standing presbytery (*ch. iv. 23*), to whom none of the rest durst join themselves (*ch. v. 13*), and that they continued together till the persecution at Stephen's death dispersed them all but the apostles (*ch. viii. 1*); but he thinks that besides these there were many hundreds in Jerusalem, if not thousands, at this time, that believed; and we have indeed read of many that *believed on him there, but durst not confess him*, and therefore I cannot think, as he does, that they were now formed into distinct congregations, for the preaching of the word and other acts of worship; nor that there was any thing of this till after the pouring out of the Spirit, and the conversions recorded in the following chapter. Here was the beginning of the Christian church: this hundred and twenty was the grain of mustard-seed that grew into a tree, the leaven that leavened the whole lump. 2. The speaker was Peter, who had been, and still was, the most forward man; and therefore notice is taken of his forwardness and zeal, to show that he had perfectly recovered the ground he lost by his denying his Master, and, Peter being designed to be the apostle of the circumcision, while the sacred story stays among the Jews, he is still brought in, as afterwards, when it comes to speak of the Gentiles, it keeps to the story of Paul.

II. The proposal which Peter made for the choice of another apostle. He stood up in the midst of the disciples, *v. 15*. He did not sit down, as one that gave laws, or had any supremacy over the rest, but stood up, as one that had only a motion to make, in which he paid a deference to his brethren, standing up when he spoke to them. Now in his speech we may observe,

1. The account he gives of the vacancy made by the death of Judas, in which he is very particular, and, as became one that Christ had breathed upon, takes notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures in it. Here is,

(1.) The power to which Judas had been advanced (*v. 17*): *He was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry* which we are invested with. Note, Many are numbered with the saints in this world that will not be found among them in the day of separation between the precious and the vile. What will it avail us to be added to the number of Christians, if we partake not of the spirit and nature of Christians? Judas's having obtained part of this ministry was but an aggravation of his sin and ruin, as it will be of theirs who *prophesied in Christ's name*, and yet were *workers of iniquity*.

(2.) The sin of Judas, notwithstanding his advancement to this honour. He was *guide to those that took Jesus*, not only informed Christ's persecutors where they might find him (which they might have done effectually though he had kept out of sight), but he had the impudence to appear openly at the head of the party that seized him. He went before them to the place, and, as if he had been proud of the honour, gave the word of command: *That same is he, hold him fast*. Note, Ringleaders in sin are the worst of sinners, especially if those that by their office should have been guides to the friends of Christ are guides to his enemies.

(3.) The ruin of Judas by this sin. Perceiving the chief priests to seek the life of Christ and his disciples, he thought to save his by going over to them, and not only so, but to get an estate under them, of which his wages for his service, he hoped, would be but an earnest; but see what came of it. [1.] He lost his money shamefully enough (*v. 18*): *He purchased a field with the thirty pieces of silver*, which were the *reward of his iniquity*. He did not purchase the field, but the wages of his unrighteousness did, and it is very elegantly expressed thus, in derision of his projects to enrich himself by this bargain. He thought to have purchased a field for himself, as Gehazi did with what he got from Naaman by a lie (see 2 Kings v. 26), but it proved the purchase of a field to bury strangers in; and what was he or any of his the better for this? It was to him an unrighteous mammon, it deceived him; and the reward of his iniquity was the *stumbling-block of his iniquity*. [2.] He lost his life more shamefully. We were told (Matt. xxvii. 5) that he *went away in despair*, and was suffocated (so the word signifies there, and no more); here it is added (as latter historians add to those who went before) that, being strangled, or choked with grief and horror, he *fell headlong, fell on his face* (so Dr. Hammond), and partly with the swelling of his own breast, and partly with the violence of the fall, he *burst asunder in the midst*, so that *all his bowels tumbled out*. If, when the devil was cast out of a child, he *tore him, threw him down, and rent him*, and almost killed him (as we find Mark ix. 26;



Luke ix. 42), no wonder if, when he had full possession of Judas, he threw him headlong, and burst him. The suffocation of him, which Matthew relates, would make him swell till he burst, which Peter relates. He burst asunder *with a great noise* (so Dr. Edwards), which was heard by the neighbours, and so, as it follows, it came to be known (v. 19): *His bowels gushed out*; Luke writes like a physician, understanding all the entrails of the middle and lower ventricle. Bowelling is part of the punishment of traitors. Justly do those bowels gush out that were shut up against the Lord Jesus. And perhaps Christ had an eye to the fate of Judas, when he said of the wicked servant that he would cut him in sunder, Matt. xxiv. 51.

(4.) The public notice that was taken of this: *It was known to all the dwellers in Jerusalem*. It was, as it were, put into the newspapers, and was all the talk of the town, as a remarkable judgment of God upon him that betrayed his Master, v. 19. It was not only discoursed of among the disciples, but it was in every body's mouth, and nobody disputed the truth of the fact. *It was known*, that is, it was known to be true, incontestably so. Now one would think this should have awakened those to repentance that had had any hand in the death of Christ when they saw him that had the first hand thus made an example. But their hearts were hardened, and, as to those of them that were to be softened, it must be done by the word, and the Spirit working with it. Here is one proof of the notoriety of the thing mentioned, that the field which was purchased with Judas's money was called *Aceldama—the field of blood*, because it was bought with the *price of blood*, which perpetuated the infamy not only of him that sold that innocent precious blood, but of those that bought it too. Look how they will answer it, when God shall make inquisition for blood.

(5.) The fulfilling of the scriptures in this, which had spoken so plainly of it, *that it must needs be fulfilled*, v. 16. Let none be surprised nor stumble at it, that this should be the exit of one of the twelve, for David had not only foretold his sin (which Christ had taken notice of, John xiii. 18, from Ps. xli. 9, He that *eateth bread with me* hath *lifted up the heel against me*), but had also foretold, [1.] His punishment (Ps. lxi. 25): *Let his habitation be desolate*. This Psalm refers to the Messiah. Mention is made but two or three verses before of their giving him gall and vinegar, and therefore the following predictions of the destruction of David's enemies must be applied to the enemies of Christ, and particularly to Judas. Perhaps he had some habitation of his own at Jerusalem, which, upon this, every body was afraid to live in, and so it became desolate. This prediction signifies the same with that of Bildad concerning the wicked man, that

*his confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and shall bring him to the king of terrors: it shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his; brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation*, Job xviii. 14, 15. [2.] The substitution of another in his room. His *bishopric*, or his office (for so the word signifies in general) *shall another take*, which is quoted from Ps. cix. 8. With this quotation Peter very aptly introduces the following proposal. Note, We are not to think the worse of any office that God has instituted (whether magistracy or ministry) either for the wickedness of any that are in that office or for the ignominious punishment of that wickedness; nor will God suffer any purpose of his to be frustrated, any commission of his to be vacated, or any work of his to be undone, for the miscarriages of those that are entrusted therewith. *The unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of no effect*. Judas is hanged, but his bishopric is not lost. It is said of *his habitation*, that *no man shall dwell therein*, there he shall have no heir; but it is not said so of his bishopric, there he shall not want a successor. It is with the officers of the church as with the members of it, if the *natural branches be broken off*, others shall be *grafted in*, Rom. xi. 17. Christ's cause shall never be lost for want of witnesses.

2. The motion he makes for the choice of another apostle, v. 21, 22. Here observe, (1.) How the person must be qualified that must fill up the vacancy. It must be one of *these men*, these seventy disciples, *that have companied with us*, that have constantly attended us, *all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*, preaching and working miracles for three years and a half, *beginning from the baptism of John*, from which the gospel of Christ commenced, *unto that same day that he was taken up from us*. Those that have been diligent, faithful, and constant, in the discharge of their duty in a lower station, are fittest to be preferred to a higher; those that have been faithful in a little shall be entrusted with more. And none should be employed as ministers of Christ, preachers of his gospel, and rulers in his church, but those that are well acquainted with his doctrine and doings, from first to last. None shall be an apostle but one that has companied with the apostles, and that continually; not that has visited them now and then, but been intimately conversant with them. (2.) To what work he is called that must fill up the vacancy: He must be *a witness with us of his resurrection*. By this it appears that others of the disciples were with the eleven when Christ appeared to them, else they could not have been *witnesses with them*, as competent witnesses as they, of his resurrection. The great thing which the apostles were to attest to the world was Christ's resurrection, for this was the great proof of his being the Messiah, and the



foundation of our hope in him. See what the apostles were ordained to, not to a secular dignity and dominion, but to preach Christ, and the power of his resurrection.

III. The nomination of the person that was to succeed Judas in his office as apostle.

1. Two, who were known to have been Christ's constant attendants, and men of great integrity, were set up as candidates for the place (v. 23): *They appointed two*; not the eleven, they did not take upon them to determine who should be put up, but the hundred and twenty, for to them Peter spoke, and not to the eleven. The two they nominated were *Joseph and Matthias*, of neither of whom do we read elsewhere, except this Joseph be the same with that *Jesus who is called Justus*, of whom Paul speaks (Col. iv. 11), and who is said to be *of the circumcision*, a native Jew, as this was, and who was a fellow-worker with Paul in the kingdom of God and a comfort to him; and then it is observable that, though he came short of being an apostle, he did not therefore quit the ministry, but was very useful in a lower station; for, *Are all apostles? Are all prophets?* Some think this Joseph is he that is called *Joses* (Mark vi. 3), the brother of *James the less* (Mark xv. 40), and was called *Joses the just*, as he was called *James the just*. Some confound this with that *Joses* mentioned Acts iv. 36. But that was of Cyprus, this of Galilee; and, it should seem, to distinguish them, that was called *Barnabas—a son of consolation*; this *Barsabas—a son of the oath*. These two were both of them such worthy men, and so well qualified for the office, that they could not tell which of them was the fitter, but all agreed it must be one of these two. They did not propose themselves nor strive for the place, but humbly sat still, and were appointed to it.

2. They applied to God by prayer for direction, not which of the seventy, for none of the rest could stand in competition with these in the opinion of all present, but *which of these two?* v. 24, 25. (1.) They appeal to God as the searcher of hearts: "*Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men*, which we do not, and better than they know their own." Observe, When an apostle was to be chosen, he must be chosen by his heart, and the temper and disposition of that. Yet Jesus, who knew all men's hearts, for wise and holy ends chose Judas to be one of the twelve. It is comfortable to us, in our prayers for the welfare of the church and its ministers, that the God to whom we pray *knows the hearts of all men*, and has them not only under his eye, but in his hand, and turns them which way soever he will, can make them fit for his purpose, if he do not find them so, by giving them another spirit. (2.) They desire to know which of these God had chosen: *Lord, show us this*, and we are satisfied. It is fit that God should choose his own servants; and so far as he in any way

by the disposals of his providence or the gifts of his Spirit, shows whom he hath chosen, or what he hath chosen, for us, we ought to comply with him. (3.) They are ready to receive him as a brother whom God hath chosen; for they are not contriving to have so much the more dignity themselves, by keeping out another, but desire to have one to *take part of this ministry and apostleship*, to join with them in the work and share with them in the honour, *from which Judas by transgression fell*, threw himself, by deserting and betraying his Master, *from the place of an apostle*, of which he was unworthy, that he might go to *his own place*, the place of a traitor, the fittest place for him, not only to the gibbet, but to hell—this was his own place. Note, Those that betray Christ, as they fall from the dignity of relation to him, so they fall into all misery. It is said of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 25) that he *went to his own place*, that is, says one of the rabbins, *he went to hell*. Dr. Whitby quotes Ignatius saying, There is appointed to every man *ἰδιος τόπος—a proper place*, which imports the same with that of God's rendering to every man according to his works. And our Saviour had said that Judas's own place should be such that *it had been better for him that he had never been born* (Matt. xxvi. 24)—his misery such as to be worse than not being. Judas had been a hypocrite, and hell is the proper place of such; other sinners, as inmates, have their portion with them, Matt. xxiv. 51. (4.) The doubt was determined by lot (v. 26), which is an appeal to God, and lawful to be used for determining matters not otherwise determinable, provided it be done in a solemn religious manner, and with prayer, the prayer of faith; for *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord*, Prov. xvi. 33. Matthias was not ordained by the imposition of hands, as presbyters were, for he was chosen by lot, which was the act of God; and therefore, as he must be baptized, so he must be ordained, by the Holy Ghost, as they all were not many days after. Thus the number of the apostles was made up, as afterwards, when James, another of the twelve, was martyred, Paul was made an apostle.

## CHAP. II.

Between the promise of the Messiah (even the latest of those promises) and his coming many ages intervened; but between the promise of the Spirit and his coming there were but a few days; and during those days the apostles, though they had received orders to preach the gospel to every creature, and to begin at Jerusalem, yet lay perfectly wind-bound, incognito—concealed, and not offering to preach. But in this chapter the north wind and the south wind awake, and then they awake, and we have them in the pulpit presently. Here is, I. The descent of the Spirit upon the apostles, and those that were with them, on the day of pentecost, ver. 1—4. II. The various speculations which this occasioned among the people that were now met in Jerusalem from all parts, ver. 5—13. III. The sermon which Peter preached to them hereupon, wherein he shows that this pouring out of the Spirit was the accomplishment of an Old-Testament promise (ver. 14—21), that it was a confirmation of Christ's being the Messiah, which was already proved by his resurrection (ver. 22—32), and that it was a fruit and evidence of his ascension into heaven, ver. 33—36. IV. The good effect of this sermon in the conversion of many to the faith of Christ, and their addition to the church, ver. 37—41. V. The eminent piety and charity of



those primitive Christians, and the manifest tokens of God's presence with them, and power in them, ver. 42-47.

AND when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

We have here an account of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples of Christ. Observe,

I. When, and where, this was done, which are particularly noted, for the greater certainty of the thing.

1. It was *when the day of pentecost was fully come*, in which there seems to be a reference to the manner of the expression in the institution of this feast, where it is said (Lev. xxiii. 15), *You shall count unto you seven sabbaths complete*, from the day of the offering of the first-fruits, which was the next day but one after the passover, the sixteenth day of the month Abib, which was the day that Christ arose. This day was *fully come*, that is, the night preceding, with a part of the day, was fully past. (1.) The Holy Ghost came down at the time of a solemn feast, because there was then a great concourse of people to Jerusalem from all parts of the country, and the proselytes from other countries, which would make it the more public, and the fame of it to be spread the sooner and further, which would contribute much to the propagating of the gospel into all nations. Thus now, as before at the passover, the Jewish feasts served to toll the bell for gospel services and entertainments. (2.) This feast of pentecost was kept in remembrance of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, whence the incorporating of the Jewish church was to be dated, which Dr. Lightfoot reckons to be just one thousand four hundred and forty-seven years before this. Fitly, therefore, is the Holy Ghost given at that feast, in fire and in tongues, for the promulgation of the evangelical law, not as that to one nation, but to every creature. (3.) This feast of pentecost happened on the *first day of the week*, which was an additional honour put on that day, and a confirmation of it to be the Christian sabbath, *the day which the Lord hath made*, to be a standing memorial in his church of those two great blessings—the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit, both on that day of the week. This serves not only to justify us in observing that day under the style and title of *the Lord's day*, but to direct us in the sanctifying of it to give God praise particu-

larly for those two great blessings; every Lord's day in the year, I think, there should be a full and particular notice taken in our prayers and praises of these two, as there is by some churches of the one once a year, upon Easter-day, and of the other once a year, upon Whit-sunday. Oh! that we may do it with suitable affections!

2. It was when *they were all with one accord in one place*. What place it was we are not told particularly, whether in the temple, where they attended at public times (Luke xxiv. 53), or whether in their own upper room, where they met at other times. But it was at Jerusalem, because this had been the place which God chose, to put his name there, and the prophecy was that thence the word of the Lord should go forth to all nations, Isa. ii. 3. It was now the place of the general rendezvous of all devout people: here God had promised to meet them and bless them; here therefore he meets them with this blessing of blessings. Though Jerusalem had done the utmost dishonour imaginable to Christ, yet he did this honour to Jerusalem, to teach us not to fall out with places, nor conceive prejudices against them; for God has his remnant in all places; he had this in Jerusalem. Here the disciples were in one place, and they were not as yet so many but that one place, and no large one, would hold them all. And here they were *with one accord*. We cannot forget how often, while their Master was with them, there were *strifes among them, who should be the greatest*; but now all these strifes were at an end, we hear no more of them. What they had received already of the Holy Ghost, when Christ breathed on them, had in a good measure rectified the mistakes upon which those contests were grounded, and had disposed them to holy love. They had prayed more together of late than usual (*ch. i. 14*), and this made them love one another better. By his grace he thus prepared them for the gift of the Holy Ghost; for that blessed dove comes not where there is noise and clamour, but moves upon the face of the still waters, not the rugged ones. Would we have the Spirit poured out upon us from on high? Let us be all of one accord, and, notwithstanding variety of sentiments and interests, as no doubt there was among those disciples, let us agree to love one another; for, where *brethren dwell together in unity*, there it is that *the Lord commands his blessing*.

II. How, and in what manner, the Holy Ghost came upon them. We often read in the Old Testament of God's coming down in a cloud; as when he took possession first of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple, which intimates the darkness of that dispensation. And Christ went up to heaven in a cloud, to intimate how much we are kept in the dark concerning the upper world. But the Holy Ghost did not descend in a cloud; for he was to dispel and scatter the clouds



that overspread men's minds, and to bring light into the world.

1. Here is an audible summons given them to awaken their expectations of something great, v. 2. It is here said, (1.) That it came *suddenly*, did not rise gradually, as common winds do, but was at the height immediately. It came sooner than they expected, and startled even those that were now together waiting, and probably employed in some religious exercises. (2.) It was a *sound from heaven*, like a thunder-clap, Rev. vi. 1. God is said to *bring the winds out of his treasures* (Ps. cxxxv. 7), and to *gather them in his hands*, Prov. xxx. 4. From him this sound came, like the voice of one crying, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*. (3.) It was the sound of a wind, for the way of the Spirit is like that of the wind (John iii. 8), *thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it comes nor whither it goes*. When the Spirit of life is to enter into the dry bones, the prophet is told to *prophecy unto the wind: Come from the four winds, O breath*, Ezek. xxxvii. 9. And though it was not *in the wind* that the Lord came to Elijah, yet this prepared him to receive his discovery of himself in the *still small voice*, 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. *God's way is in the whirlwind and the storm* (Nah. i. 3), and out of the whirlwind he spoke to Job. (4.) It was a *rushing mighty wind*; it was strong and violent, and came not only with a great noise, but with great force, as if it would bear down all before it. This was to signify the powerful influences and operations of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, and thereby upon the world, that they should be *mighty through God, to the casting down of imaginations*. (5.) It filled not only the room, but *all the house where they were sitting*. Probably it alarmed the whole city, but, to show that it was supernatural, presently fixed upon that particular house: as some think the wind that was sent to arrest Jonah affected only the ship that he was in (Jon. i. 4), and as the wise men's star stood over the house where the child was. This would direct the people who observed it whither to go to enquire the meaning of it. This wind filling the house would strike an awe upon the disciples, and help to put them into a very serious, reverent, and composed frame, for the receiving of the Holy Ghost. Thus the convictions of the Spirit make way for his comforts; and the rough blasts of that blessed wind prepare the soul for its soft and gentle gales.

2. Here is a visible sign of the gift they were to receive. They saw *cloven tongues, like as of fire* (v. 3), and it sat—*ἐκάθισεν*, not they sat, those cloven tongues, but he, that is the Spirit (signified thereby), rested upon each of them, as he is said to rest upon the prophets of old. Or, as Dr. Hammond describes it, "There was an appearance of something like flaming fire lighting on every one of them, which divided asunder, and so formed

the resemblance of tongues, with that part of them that was next their heads divided or cloven." The flame of a candle is somewhat like a tongue; and there is a meteor which naturalists call *ignis lambens—a gentle flame*, not a devouring fire; such was this. Observe,

(1.) There was an outward sensible sign, for the confirming of the faith of the disciples themselves, and for the convincing of others. Thus the prophets of old had frequently their first mission confirmed by signs, that all Israel might know them to be established prophets.

(2.) The sign given was fire, that John Baptist's saying concerning Christ might be fulfilled, *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire*; with the Holy Ghost as with fire. They were now, in the feast of pentecost, celebrating the memorial of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai; and as that was given in fire, and therefore is called a fiery law, so is the gospel. Ezekiel's mission was confirmed by a vision of *burning coals of fire* (ch. i. 13), and Isaiah's by a *coal of fire* touching his lips, ch. vi. 7. The Spirit, like fire, melts the heart, separates and burns up the dross, and kindles pious and devout affections in the soul, in which, as in the fire upon the altar, the spiritual sacrifices are offered up. This is that fire which Christ came to send upon the earth. Luke xii. 49.

(3.) This fire appeared in cloven tongues. The operations of the Spirit were many; that of speaking with divers tongues was one, and was singled out to be the first indication of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to that this sign had a reference. [1.] They were tongues; for from the Spirit we have the word of God, and by him Christ would speak to the world, and he gave the Spirit to the disciples, not only to endue them with knowledge, but to endue them with a power to publish and proclaim to the world what they knew; for *the dispensation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*. [2.] These tongues were cloven, to signify that God would hereby divide unto all nations the knowledge of his grace, as he is said to have divided to them by his providence the light of the heavenly bodies, Deut. iv. 19. The tongues were divided, and yet they still continued all of one accord; for there may be a sincere unity of affections where yet there is a diversity of expression. Dr. Lightfoot observes that the dividing of tongues at Babel was the casting off of the heathen; for, when they had lost the language in which alone God was spoken of and preached, they utterly lost the knowledge of God and religion, and fell into idolatry. But now, after above two thousand years, God, by another dividing of tongues, restores the knowledge of himself to the nations.

(4.) This fire sat upon them for some time, to denote the constant residence of the Holy Ghost with them. The prophetic gifts of old were conferred sparingly and but at some



times, but the disciples of Christ had the gifts of the Spirit always with them, though the sign, we may suppose, soon disappeared. Whether these flames of fire passed from one to another, or whether there were as many flames as there were persons, is not certain. But they must be strong and bright flames that would be visible in the day-light, as it now was, for the day was fully come.

III. What was the immediate effect of this?

1. *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost*, more plentifully and powerfully than they were before. They were filled with the graces of the Spirit, and were more than ever under his sanctifying influences—were now holy, and heavenly, and spiritual, more weaned from this world and better acquainted with the other. They were more filled with the comforts of the Spirit, rejoiced more than ever in the love of Christ and the hope of heaven, and in it all their griefs and fears were swallowed up. They were also, for the proof of this, filled with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are especially meant here; they were endued with miraculous powers for the furtherance of the gospel. It seems evident to me that not only the twelve apostles, but all the hundred and twenty disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost alike at this time—all the seventy disciples, who were apostolic men, and employed in the same work, and all the rest too that were to preach the gospel; for it is said expressly (Eph. iv. 8, 11), *When Christ ascended on high* (which refers to this, v. 33), *he gave gifts unto men*, not only some apostles (such were the twelve), but some prophets and some evangelists (such were many of the seventy disciples, itinerant preachers), and some pastors and teachers settled in particular churches, as we may suppose some of these afterwards were. The *all* here must refer to the *all* that were together, v. 1; ch. i. 14, 15. 2. *They began to speak with other tongues*, besides their native language, though they had never learned any other. They spoke not matters of common conversation, but the word of God, and the praises of his name, *as the Spirit gave them utterance*, or gave them to speak ἀποφθίγγεσθαι—*apophthegms*, substantial and weighty sayings, worthy to be had in remembrance. It is probable that it was not only one that was enabled to speak one language, and another another (as it was with the several families that were dispersed from Babel), but that every one was enabled to speak divers languages, as he should have occasion to use them. And we may suppose that they understood not only themselves but one another too, which the builders of Babel did not, Gen. xi. 7. They did not speak here and there a word of another tongue, or stammer out some broken sentences, but spoke it as readily, properly, and elegantly, as if it had been their mother-tongue; for whatever was produced by miracle was the best of the kind. They spoke not from any previous thought or medita-

tion, but *as the Spirit gave them utterance*; he furnished them with the matter as well as the language. Now this was, (1., A very great miracle; it was a miracle upon the mind (and so had most of the nature of a gospel miracle), for in the mind words are framed. They had not only never learned these languages, but had never learned any foreign tongue, which might have facilitated these; nay, for aught that appears, they had never so much as heard these languages spoken, nor had any idea of them. They were neither scholars nor travellers, nor had had any opportunity of learning languages either by books or conversation. Peter indeed was forward enough to speak in his own tongue, but the rest of them were no spokesmen, nor were they quick of apprehension; yet now not only the heart of the rash understands knowledge, but the tongue of the stammerers is ready to speak eloquently, Isa. xxxii. 4. When Moses complained, *I am slow of speech*, God said, *I will be with thy mouth*, and Aaron shall be thy spokesman. But he did more for these messengers of his: he that made man's mouth new-made theirs. (2.) A very proper, needful, and serviceable miracle. The language the disciples spoke was Syriac, a dialect of the Hebrew; so that it was necessary that they should be endued with the gift, for the understanding both of the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, in which it was written, and of the original Greek of the New Testament, in which it was to be written. But this was not all; they were commissioned to *preach the gospel to every creature, to disciple all nations*. But here is an insuperable difficulty at the threshold. How shall they master the several languages so as to speak intelligibly to all nations? It will be the work of a man's life to learn their languages. And therefore, to prove that Christ could give authority to preach to the nations, he gives ability to preach to them in their own language. And it should seem that this was the accomplishment of that promise which Christ made to his disciples (John xiv 12), *Greater works than these shall you do*. For this may well be reckoned, all things considered, a greater work than the miraculous cures Christ wrought. Christ himself did not speak with other tongues, nor did he enable his disciples to do so while he was with them: but it was the first effect of the *pouring out of the Spirit* upon them. And archbishop Tillotson thinks it probable that if the conversion of infidels to Christianity were now sincerely and vigorously attempted, by men of honest minds, God would extraordinarily countenance such an attempt with all fitting assistance, as he did the first publication of the gospel.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the



multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

We have here an account of the public notice that was taken of this extraordinary gift with which the disciples were all on a sudden endued. Observe,

I. The great concourse of people that there was now at Jerusalem, it should seem more than was usual at the feast of pentecost. *There were dwelling or abiding at Jerusalem* Jews that were *devout men*, disposed to religion, and that had the fear of God before their eyes (so the word properly signifies), some of them *proselytes of righteousness*, that were circumcised, and admitted members of the Jewish church, others only *proselytes of the gate*, that forsook idolatry, and gave up themselves to the worship of the true God, but not to the ceremonial law; some of those that were at Jerusalem now, *out of every nation under heaven*, whither the Jews were dispersed, or whence proselytes were come. The expression is hyperbolic, denoting that there were some from most of the then known parts of the world; as much as ever Tyre was, or London is, the rendezvous of trading people from all parts, Jerusalem at that time was of religious people from all parts. Now, 1. We may here see what were some of those countries whence those strangers came (v. 9—11), some from the eastern countries, as the *Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia*, the posterity of Shem; thence we come in order to Judea, which ought to be mentioned, because, though the language of those in Judea was the same with that which the disciples spoke, yet, before, they spoke it with the north-country tone and dialect (*Thou art a Galilean, and thy speech betrays thee*), but now they spoke it as correctly

as the inhabitants of Judea themselves did. Next come the inhabitants of Cappadocia Pontus, and that country about Propontis which was particularly called *Asia*, and these were the countries in which those strangers were scattered to whom St. Peter writes. 1 Pet. i. 1. Next come the dwellers in *Phrygia and Pamphylia*, which lay westward, the posterity of Japhet, as were also the *strangers of Rome*; there were some also that dwelt in the southern parts of *Egypt, in the parts of Libya about Cyrene*; there were also some from the island of Crete, and some from the deserts of Arabia; but they were all either Jews originally, dispersed into those countries; or *proselytes* to the Jewish religion, but natives of those countries. Dr. Whitby observes that the Jewish writers about this time, as Philo and Josephus, speak of the Jews as *dwelling every where through the whole earth*; and that *there is not a people upon earth among whom some Jews do not inhabit*. 2. We may enquire what brought all those Jews and proselytes together to Jerusalem as this time? not to make a transient visit thither to the feast of pentecost, for they are said to dwell there. They took lodgings there, because there was at this time a general expectation of the appearing of the Messiah; for Daniel's weeks had just now expired, the sceptre had departed from Judah, and it was then generally thought that *the kingdom of God would immediately appear*, Luke xix. 11. This brought those who were most zealous and devout to Jerusalem, to sojourn there, that they might have an early share in the kingdom of the Messiah and the blessings of that kingdom.

II. The amazement with which these strangers were seized when they heard the disciples speak in their own tongues. It should seem, the disciples spoke in various languages before the people of those languages came to them; for it is intimated (v. 6) that the spreading of the report of this abroad was that which *brought the multitude together*, especially those of different countries, who seem to have been more affected with this work of wonder than the inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves.

1. They observe that the speakers are all Galileans, that know no other than their mother tongue (v. 7); they are despicable men, from whom nothing learned nor polite is to be expected. God chose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty. Christ was thought to be a Galilean, and his disciples really were so, unlearned and ignorant men.

2. They acknowledge that they spoke intelligibly and readily their own language (which they were the most competent judges of), so correctly and fluently that none of their own countrymen could speak it better: *We hear every man in our own tongue wherein we were born* (v. 8), that is, we hear one or other of them speak our native language



The Parthians hear one of them speak their language, the Medes hear another of them speak theirs; and so of the rest; v. 11, *We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* Their respective languages were not only unknown at Jerusalem, but probably despised and undervalued, and therefore it was not only a surprise, but a pleasing surprise, to them to hear the language of their own country spoken, as it naturally is to those that are strangers in a strange land. (1.) The things they heard the apostles discourse of were the *wonderful works of God*, μεγαλῆτα τοῦ Θεοῦ—*Magnalia Dei*, the great things of God. It is probable that the apostles spoke of Christ, and redemption by him, and the grace of the gospel; and these are indeed the great things of God, which will be for ever marvellous in our eyes. (2.) They heard them both praise God for these great things and instruct the people concerning these things, *in their own tongue*, according as they perceived the language of their hearers, or those that enquired of them, to be. Now though, perhaps, by dwelling some time at Jerusalem, they were got to be so much masters of the Jewish language that they could have understood the meaning of the disciples if they had spoken that language, yet, [1.] This was more strange, and helped to convince their judgment, that this doctrine was of God; for *tongues were for a sign* to those that believed not, 1 Cor. xiv. 22. [2.] It was more kind, and helped to engage their affections, as it was a plain indication of the favour intended to the Gentiles, and that the knowledge and worship of God should no longer be confined to the Jews, but the partition-wall should be broken down; and this is to us a plain intimation of the mind and will of God, that the sacred records of God's wonderful works should be preserved by all nations *in their own tongue*; that the scriptures should be read, and public worship performed, in the vulgar languages of the nations.

3. They wonder at it, and look upon it as an astonishing thing (v. 12): *They were all amazed*, they were in an *ecstasy*, so the word is; and they were in doubt what the meaning of it was, and whether it was to introduce the kingdom of the Messiah, which they were big with the expectation of; they asked themselves and one another τί αὐτῶν τοῦτο εἶναι;—*Quid hoc sibi vult?*—*What is the tendency of this?* Surely it is to dignify, and so to distinguish, these men as messengers from heaven; and therefore, like Moses at the bush, they will *turn aside, and see this great sight.*

III. The scorn which some made of it who were natives of Judea and Jerusalem, probably the scribes and Pharisees, and chief priests, who always resisted the Holy Ghost; they said, *These men are full of new wine*, or *sweet wine*; they have drunk too much this festival-time, v. 13. Not that

they were so absurd as to think that wine in the head would enable men to speak languages which they never learned; but these, being native Jews, knew not, as the others did, that what was spoken was really the languages of other nations, and therefore took it to be gibberish and nonsense, such as drunkards, those *fools in Israel*, sometimes talk. As when they resolved not to believe the finger of the Spirit in Christ's miracles, they turned it off with this, "He casteth out devils by compact with the prince of the devils;" so, when they resolved not to believe the voice of the Spirit in the apostles' preaching, they turned it off with this, *These men are full of new wine.* And, if they called the Master of the house a wine-bibber, no marvel if they so call those of his household.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19 A I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: 21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. 22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24 Whom God hath raised

up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. 25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved : 26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope : 27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life ; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. 29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens : but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

We have here the first-fruits of the Spirit in the sermon which Peter preached immediately, directed, not to those of other nations in a strange language (we are not told what answer he gave to those that were amazed, and said, *What meaneth this?*) but to the Jews in the vulgar language, even to those that mocked ; for he begins with the notice of that (v. 15), and addresses his discourse (v. 14) *to the men of Judea and the inhabitants of Jerusalem* ; but we have reason enough to think that the other disciples continued to speak to those who understood

them (and therefore flocked about them), in the languages of their respective countries, *the wonderful works of God*. And it was not by Peter's preaching only, but that of all, or most, of the rest of the hundred and twenty, *that three thousand souls were that day converted*, and added to the church ; but Peter's sermon only is recorded, to be an evidence for him that he was thoroughly recovered from his fall, and thoroughly restored to the divine favour. He that had sneakingly denied Christ now as courageously confesses him. Observe,

I. His introduction or preface, wherein he craves the attention of the auditory, or demands it rather : *Peter stood up* (v. 14), to show that he was not drunk, *with the eleven*, who concurred with him in what he said, and probably in their turns spoke likewise to the same purport ; those that were of greatest authority stood up to speak to the scoffing Jews, and to confront those who contradicted and blasphemed, but left the seventy disciples to speak to the willing proselytes from other nations, who were not so prejudiced, in their own language. Thus among Christ's ministers, some of greater gifts are called out to instruct those that oppose themselves, to take hold of sword and spear ; others of meaner abilities are employed in instructing those that resign themselves, and to be vine-dressers and husbandmen. *Peter lifted up his voice*, as one that was both well assured of and much affected with what he said, and was neither afraid nor ashamed to own it. He applied himself *to the men of Judea, ἀνδρες Ἰουδαίων—the men that were Jews* ; so it should be read ; “ and you especially that dwell at Jerusalem, who were accessory to the death of Jesus, *be this known unto you*, which you did not know before, and which you are concerned to know now, *and hearken to my words*, who would draw you to Christ, and not to the words of the scribes and Pharisees, that would draw you from him. My Master is gone, whose words you have often heard in vain, and shall hear no more as you have done, but he speaks to you by us ; hearken now to our words.”

II. His answer to their blasphemous calumny (v. 15) : “ *These men are not drunken, as you suppose*. These disciples of Christ, that now *speak with other tongues*, speak good sense, and know what they say, and so do those they speak to, who are led by their discourses into the knowledge of *the wonderful works of God*. You cannot think they are drunk, for *it is but the third hour of the day*,” nine of the clock in the morning ; and before this time, on the sabbaths and solemn feasts, the Jews did not eat nor drink : nay, ordinarily, *those that are drunk are drunk in the night*, and not in the morning ; those are besotted drunkards indeed who, *when they awake*, immediately *seek it yet again*, Prov. xxiii 35.



III. His account of the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, which is designed to awaken them all to embrace the faith of Christ, and to join themselves to his church. Two things he resolves it into:—that it was the fulfilling of the scripture, and the fruit of Christ's resurrection and ascension, and consequently the proof of both.

1. That it was the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old Testament which related to the kingdom of the Messiah, and therefore an evidence that this kingdom is come, and the other predictions of it are fulfilled. He specifies one, that of the prophet Joel, ch. ii. 28. It is observable that though Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance, yet he did not set aside the scriptures, nor think himself above them; nay, much of his discourse is quotation out of the Old Testament, to which he appeals, and with which he proves what he says. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bible; and the Spirit is given not to supersede the scriptures, but to enable us to understand and improve the scriptures. Observe,

(1.) The text itself that Peter quotes, v. 17—21. It refers to *the last days*, the times of the gospel, which are called the *last days* because the dispensation of God's kingdom among men, which the gospel sets up, is the last dispensation of divine grace, and we are to look for no other than the continuation of this to the end of time. Or, *in the last days*, that is, a great while after the ceasing of prophecy in the Old-Testament church. Or, in the days immediately preceding the destruction of the Jewish nation, in the last days of that people, just before that *great and notable day of the Lord* spoken of, v. 20. "It was prophesied of and promised, and therefore you ought to expect it, and not to be surprised at it; to desire it, and bid it welcome, and not to dispute it, as not worth taking notice of." The apostle quotes the whole paragraph, for it is good to take scripture entire; now it was foretold,

[1.] That there should be a more plentiful and extensive effusion of the Spirit of grace from on high than had ever yet been. The prophets of the Old Testament had been filled with the Holy Ghost, and it was said of the people of Israel that God gave them his good Spirit to instruct them, Neh. ix. 20. But now the Spirit shall be poured out, not only upon the Jews, but upon all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, though yet Peter himself did not understand it so, as appears, ch. xi. 17. Or, upon all flesh, that is, upon some of all ranks and conditions of men. The Jewish doctors taught that the Spirit came only upon wise and rich men, and such as were of the seed of Israel; but God will not tie himself to their rules.

[2.] That the Spirit should be in them a Spirit of prophecy; by the Spirit they should be enabled to foretell things to come, and to

preach the gospel to every creature. This power shall be given without distinction of sex—not only your sons, but your daughters shall prophesy; without distinction of age—both your young men and your old men shall see visions, and dream dreams, and in them receive divine revelations, to be communicated to the church; and without distinction of outward condition—even the servants and handmaids shall receive of the Spirit, and shall prophesy (v. 18); or, in general, men and women, whom God calls his servants and his handmaids. In the beginning of the age of prophecy in the Old Testament there were schools of the prophets, and, before that, the Spirit of prophecy came upon the elders of Israel that were appointed to the government; but now the Spirit shall be poured out upon persons of inferior rank, and such as were not brought up in the schools of the prophets, for the kingdom of the Messiah is to be purely spiritual. The mention of the daughters (v. 17) and the handmaidens (v. 18) would make one think that the women who were taken notice of (ch. i. 14) received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as well as the men. Philip, the evangelist, had four daughters who did prophesy (ch. xxi. 9), and St. Paul, finding abundance of the gifts both of tongues and prophecy in the church of Corinth, saw it needful to prohibit women's use of those gifts in public, 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 34.

[3.] That one great thing which they should prophesy of should be the judgment that was coming upon the Jewish nation, for this was the chief thing that Christ himself had foretold (Matt. xxiv.) at his entrance into Jerusalem (Luke xix. 41), and when he was going to die (Luke xxiii. 29); and these judgments were to be brought upon them to punish them for their contempt of the gospel, and their opposition to it, though it came to them thus proved. Those that would not submit to the power of God's grace, in this wonderful effusion of his Spirit, should fall and lie under the pourings out of the vials of his wrath. Those shall break that will not bend. First, The destruction of Jerusalem, which was about forty years after Christ's death, is here called *that great and notable day of the Lord*, because it put a final period to the Mosaic economy; the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law were thereby for ever abolished and done away. The desolation itself was such as was never brought upon any place or nation, either before or since. It was *the day of the Lord*, for it was the day of his vengeance upon that people for crucifying Christ, and persecuting his ministers; it was *the year of recompences for that controversy*; yea, and for all the blood of the saints and martyrs, from the blood of righteous Abel, Matt. xxiii. 35. It was a little day of judgment; it was a *notable day*: in Joel it is called a *terrible day*, for so it was to men on earth; but nere

*ἐπιφανῆ* (after the Septuagint), a glorious, illustrious day, for so it was to Christ in heaven; it was the epiphany, his appearing, so he himself spoke of it, Matt. xxiv. 30. The destruction of the Jews was the deliverance of the Christians, who were hated and persecuted by them; and therefore that day was often spoken of by the prophets of that time, for the encouragement of suffering Christians, *that the Lord was at hand, the coming of the Lord drew nigh, the Judge stood before the door*, James v. 8, 9. Secondly, The terrible presages of that destruction are here foretold: *There shall be wonders in heaven above, the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood; and signs too in the earth beneath, blood and fire*. Josephus, in his preface to his history of the wars of the Jews, speaks of the signs and prodigies that preceded them, terrible thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes; there was a fiery comet that hung over the city for a year, and a flaming sword was seen pointing down upon it; a light shone upon the temple and the altar at midnight, as if it had been noon-day. Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of these presages: *The blood of the Son of God, the fire of the Holy Ghost now appearing, the vapour of the smoke in which Christ ascended, the sun darkened, and the moon made blood*, at the time of Christ's passion, were all loud warnings given to that unbelieving people to prepare for the judgments coming upon them. Or, it may be applied, and very fitly, to the previous judgments themselves by which that desolation was brought on. *The blood* points at the wars of the Jews with the neighbouring nations, with the Samaritans, Syrians, and Greeks, in which abundance of blood was shed, as there was also in their civil wars, and the struggles of the *seditions* (as they called them), which were very bloody; there was no peace to him that went out nor to him that came in. *The fire and vapour of smoke*, here foretold, literally came to pass in the burning of their cities, and towns, and synagogues, and temple at last. And this turning of *the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood*, bespeaks the dissolution of their government, civil and sacred, and the extinguishing of all their lights. Thirdly, The signal preservation of the Lord's people is here promised (v. 21): *Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord Jesus* (which is the description of a true Christian, 1 Cor. i. 2) *shall be saved*, shall escape that judgment which shall be a type and earnest of everlasting salvation. In the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, there was a remnant sealed to be hid in *the day of the Lord's anger*; and in the destruction by the Romans not one Christian perished. Those that distinguish themselves by singular piety shall be distinguished by special preservation. And observe, the saved remnant are described by this: that they are a praying people: *they*

*call on the name of the Lord*, which intimates that they are not saved by any merit or righteousness of their own, but purely by the favour of God, which must be sued out by prayer. It is *the name of the Lord* which *they call upon* that is *their strong tower*.

(2.) The application of this prophecy to the present event (v. 16): *This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*; it is the accomplishment of that, it is the full accomplishment of it. This is that effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh which should come, and we are to look for no other, no more than we are to look for another Messiah; for as our Messiah ever lives in heaven, reigning and interceding for his church on earth, so this Spirit of grace, the Advocate, or Comforter, that was given now, according to the promise, will, according to the same promise, continue with the church on earth to the end, and will work all its works in it and for it, and every member of it, ordinary and extraordinary, by means of the scriptures and the ministry.

2. That it was the gift of Christ, and the product and proof of his resurrection and ascension. From this *gift of the Holy Ghost*, he takes occasion to preach unto them Jesus; and this part of his sermon he introduces with another solemn preface (v. 22): "*You men of Israel, hear these words*. It is a mercy that you are within hearing of them, and it is your duty to give heed to them." Words concerning Christ should be acceptable words to the men of Israel. Here is,

(1.) An abstract of the history of the life of Christ, v. 22. He calls him *Jesus of Nazareth*, because by that name he was generally known, but (which was sufficient to roll away that reproach) he was a *man approved of God among you*, censured and condemned by men, but approved of God: God testified his approbation of his doctrine by the power he gave him to work miracles: *a man marked out by God*, so Dr. Hammond reads it; "signalized and made remarkable among you that now hear me. He was sent to you, set up, a glorious light in your land; you yourselves are witnesses how he became famous by *miracles, wonders, and signs*, works above the power of nature, out of its ordinary course, and contrary to it, *which God did by him*; that is, which he did by that divine power with which he was clothed, and in which God plainly went along with him; *for no man could do such works unless God were with him*." See what a stress Peter lays upon Christ's miracles. [1.] The matter of fact was not to be denied: "*They were done in the midst of you, in the midst of your country, your city, your solemn assemblies, as you yourselves also know*. You have been eye-witnesses of his miracles; I appeal to yourselves whether you have any thing to object against them or can offer any thing to disprove them." [2.] The inference from them cannot be disputed; the reasoning is as



strong as the evidence; if he did those miracles, certainly God approved him, *declared him to be, what he declared himself to be, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world*; for the God of truth would never set his seal to a lie.

(2.) An account of his death and sufferings which they were witness of also but a few weeks ago; and this was the greatest miracle of all, that a man approved of God should thus seem to be abandoned of him; and a man thus approved among the people, and in the midst of them, should be thus abandoned by them too. But both these mysteries are here explained. (v. 23), and his death considered, [1.] As God's act; and in him it was an act of wonderful grace and wisdom. He *delivered him to death*; not only permitted him to be put to death, but gave him up, devoted him: this is explained Rom. viii. 32, *He delivered him up for us all*. And yet he was approved of God, and there was nothing in this that signified the disapproving of him; for it was done by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, in infinite wisdom, and for holy ends, which Christ himself concurred in, and in the means leading to them. Thus divine justice must be satisfied, sinners saved, God and man brought together again, and Christ himself glorified. It was not only according to the will of God, but according to the *counsel of his will*, that he suffered and died; according to an eternal counsel, which could not be altered. This reconciled him to the cross: *Father, thy will be done*; and *Father, glorify thy name*; let thy purpose take effect, and let the great end of it be attained. [2.] As the people's act; and in them it was an act of prodigious sin and folly; it was fighting against God to persecute one whom he approved as the darling of heaven; and fighting against their own mercies to persecute one that was the greatest blessing of this earth. Neither God's designing it from eternity, nor his bringing good out of it to eternity, would in the least excuse their sin; for it was their voluntary act and deed, from a principle morally evil, and therefore "they were *wicked hands with which you have crucified and slain him*." It is probable that some of those were here present who had cried. *Crucify him, crucify him*, or had been otherwise aiding and abetting in the murder; and Peter knew it. However, it was justly looked upon as a national act, because done both by the vote of the great council and by the voice of the great crowd. It is a rule, *Refertur ad universos quod publice fit per majorem partem*—*That which is done publicly by the greater part we attribute to all*. He charges it particularly on them as parts of the nation on which it would be visited, the more effectually to bring them to faith and repentance, because that was the only way to distinguish themselves from the guilty and discharge themselves from the guilt.

(3.) An attestation of his resurrection,

which effectually wiped away the reproach of his death (v. 24): *Whom God raised up*; the same that delivered him to death delivers him *from death*, and thereby gave a higher approbation of him than he had done by any other of the *signs and wonders wrought by him*, or by all put together. This therefore he insists most largely upon.

[1.] He describes his resurrection: God *loosed the pains of death, because it was impossible that he should be holden of it*; ὡδινὰς—the sorrows of death; the word is used for *travailing pains*, and some think it signifies *the trouble and agony of his soul*, in which it was *exceedingly sorrowful, even to the death*; from these pains and sorrows of soul, *this travail of soul, the Father loosed him*, when at his death he said, *It is finished*. Thus Dr. Godwin understands it: "Those terrors which made Heman's soul lie like the slain (Ps. lxxxviii. 5, 15) had hold of Christ; but he was too strong for them, and broke through them; this was the resurrection of his soul (and it is a great thing to bring a soul out of the depths of spiritual agonies); this was not leaving his soul in hell; as that which follows, *that he should not see corruption*, speaks of the resurrection of his body; and both together make up the great resurrection." Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of this. "Having dissolved the pains of death, in reference to all that believe in him, God raised up Christ, and by his resurrection broke all the power of death, and destroyed its pangs upon his own people. He has abolished death, has altered the property of it, and, because it was not possible that he should be long holden of it, it is not possible that they should be for ever holden." But most refer this to the resurrection of Christ's body. And death (says Mr. Baxter), as a separation between soul and body, is by privation a penal state, though not dolorous by positive evil. But Dr. Hammond shows that the Septuagint, and from them the apostle here, uses the word for *cords and bands* (as Ps. xviii. 4), to which the metaphor of loosing and being held best agrees. Christ was imprisoned for our debt, was thrown into the bands of death; but, divine justice being satisfied, it was not possible he should be detained there, either by right or by force; for he had life in himself, and in his own power, and had conquered the prince of death.

[2.] He attests the truth of his resurrection (v. 32): *God hath raised him up, whereof we all are witnesses*—we apostles, and others our companions, that were intimately acquainted with him before his death, were intimately conversant with him after his resurrection, *did eat and drink with him*. They received power, by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, on purpose that they might be skilful, faithful, and courageous witnesses of this thing, notwithstanding their being charged by his enemies as having stolen him away.



[3.] He showed it to be the fulfilling of the scripture, and, because the scripture had said that he must rise again before he saw corruption, therefore *it was impossible that he should be holden by death and the grave; for David speaks of his being raised*, so it comes in, v. 25. The scripture he refers to is that of David (Ps. xvi. 8—11), which, though in part applicable to David as a saint, yet refers chiefly to Jesus Christ, of whom David was a type. Here is,

*First*, The text quoted at large (v. 25—28), for it was all fulfilled in him, and shows us, 1. The constant regard that our Lord Jesus had to his Father in his whole undertaking: *I foresaw the Lord before me continually*. He set before him his Father's glory as his end in all—for he saw that his sufferings would redound abundantly to the honour of God, and would issue in his own joy; these were set before him, and these he had an eye to, in all he did and suffered; and with the prospect of these he was borne up and carried on, John xiii. 31, 32; xvii. 4, 5. 2. The assurance he had of his Father's presence and power going along with him: *"He is on my right hand, the hand of action, strengthening, guiding, and upholding that, that I should not be moved, nor driven off from my undertaking, notwithstanding the hardships I must undergo."* This was an article of the covenant of redemption (Ps. lxxxix. 21), *With him my hand shall be established, my arm also shall strengthen him*; and therefore he is confident the work shall not miscarry in his hand. If God be at our right hand we shall not be moved. 3. The cheerfulness with which our Lord Jesus went on in his work, notwithstanding the sorrows he was to pass through: *"Being satisfied that I shall not be moved, but the good pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in my hand, therefore doth my heart rejoice, and my tongue is glad, and the thought of my sorrow is as nothing to me."* Note, It was a constant pleasure to our Lord Jesus to look to the end of his work, and to be sure that the issue would be glorious; so well pleased is he with his undertaking that it does his heart good to think how the issue would answer the design. *He rejoiced in spirit*, Luke x. 21. *My tongue was glad*. In the psalm it is, *My glory rejoiceth*; which intimates that our tongue is our glory, the faculty of speaking is an honour to us, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. Christ's tongue was glad, for when he was just entering upon his sufferings, in the close of his last supper, he sang a hymn. 4. The pleasing prospect he had of the happy issue of his death and sufferings; it was this that carried him, not only with courage, but with cheerfulness, through them; he was putting off the body, but *my flesh shall rest*; the grave shall be to the body, while it lies there, a bed of repose, and hope shall give it a sweet repose; *it shall rest in hope, for, that thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*; what fol-

lows is the matter of his hope, or assurance rather, (1.) That the soul shall not continue in a state of separation from the body; for, besides that this is some uneasiness to a human soul made for its body, it would be the continuance of death's triumph over him who was in truth a conqueror over death: *"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell"* (in *hades*, in the invisible state, so *hades* properly signifies); "but, though thou suffer it for a time to remove thither, and to remain there, yet thou wilt remand it; *thou wilt not leave it there, as thou dost the souls of other men.*" (2.) That the body shall lie but a little while in the grave: *Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption*; the body shall not continue dead so long as to begin to putrefy or become noisome; and therefore it must return to life on or before the third day after its death. Christ was God's *Holy One*, sanctified and set apart to his service in the work of redemption; he must die, for he must be consecrated by his own blood; but he must not see corruption, for his death was to be unto God of a sweet smelling savour. This was typified by the law concerning the sacrifice, *that no part of the flesh of the sacrifice which was to be eaten should be kept till the third day*, for fear it should see corruption and begin to putrefy, Lev. vii. 15—18. (3.) That his death and sufferings should be, not to him only, but to all his, an inlet to a blessed immortality: *"Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, and by me made them known to the world, and laid them open."* When the Father gave to the Son to have life in himself, a power to lay down his life and to take it again, then he showed him the way of life, both to and fro; the gates of death were open to him and the doors of the shadow of death (Job xxxviii. 17), to pass and repass through them, as his occasion led him, for man's redemption. (4.) That all his sorrows and sufferings should end in perfect and perpetual felicity: *Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance*. The reward set before him was joy, a fulness of joy, and that in God's countenance, in the countenance he gave to his undertaking, and to all those, for his sake, that should believe in him. The smiles with which the Father received him, when, at his ascension, he was brought to the Ancient of days, filled him with joy unspeakable, and that is the joy of our Lord, into which all his shall enter, and in which they shall be for ever happy.

*Secondly*, The comment upon this text, especially so much of it as relates to the resurrection of Christ. He addresses himself to them with a title of respect, *Men and brethren*, v. 29. "You are men, and therefore should be ruled by reason; you are brethren, and therefore should take kindly what is said to you by one who, being nearly related to you, is heartily concerned for you, and wishes you well. Now, give me leave freely to speak to you concerning the patriarchs



David, and let it be no offence to you if I tell you that David cannot be understood here as speaking of himself, but of the Christ to come." David is here called a patriarch, because he was the father of the royal family, and a man of great note and eminency in his generation, and whose name and memory were justly very precious. Now when we read that psalm of his, we must consider, 1. That he could not say *that of himself*, for he died, and was buried, and his sepulchre remained in Jerusalem till now, when Peter spoke this, and his bones and ashes in it. Nobly ever pretended that he had risen, and therefore he could never say of himself that he *should not see corruption*; for it was plain he did see corruption. St. Paul urges this, *ch. xiii. 35—37*. Though he was a man after God's own heart, yet he went the way of all the earth, as he saith himself (1 Kings ii. 2), both in death and burial. 2. Therefore certainly he spoke it as a prophet, with an eye to the Messiah, whose sufferings the prophets testified beforehand, and with them the glory that should follow; so did David in that psalm, as Peter here plainly shows. (1.) David knew that the Messiah should descend from his loins (*v. 30*), that God had sworn to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. He promised him a Son, the throne of whose kingdom should be established for ever, 2 Sam. vii. 12. And it is said (Ps. cxxii. 11), God swore it in truth unto David. When our Lord Jesus was born, it was promised that the Lord God would give him the throne of his father David, Luke . 32. And all Israel knew that the Messiah was to be the Son of David, that is, that, according to the flesh, he should be so by his human nature; for otherwise, according to the spirit, and by his divine nature, he was to be David's Lord, not his son. God having sworn to David that the Messiah, promised to his fathers, should be his son and successor, the fruit of his loins, and heir to his throne, he kept this in view, in penning his psalms. (2.) Christ being the fruit of his loins, and consequently in his loins when he penned that psalm (as Levi is said to be in Abraham's loins when he paid tithes to Melchizedek), if what he says, as in his own person, be not applicable to himself (as it is plain that it is not), we must conclude it points to that son of his that was then in his loins, in whom his family and kingdom were to have their perfection and perpetuity; and therefore, when he says that *his soul should not be left in its separate state, nor his flesh see corruption*, without doubt he must be understood to speak of the resurrection of Christ, *v. 31*. And as Christ died, so he rose again, according to the scriptures; and that he did so we are witnesses. (3.) Here is a glance at his ascension too. As David did not rise from the dead, so neither did he ascend into the heavens, bodily, as Christ did,

*v. 34*. And further, to prove that when he spoke of the resurrection he meant it of Christ, he observes that when in another psalm he speaks of the next step of his exaltation he plainly shows that he spoke of another person, and such another as was his Lord (Ps. cx. 1): "*The Lord said unto my Lord, when he had raised him from the dead, Sit thou at my right hand, in the highest dignity and dominion there; be thou entrusted with the administration of the kingdom both of providence and grace; sit there as king, until I make thy foes either thy friends or thy footstool,*" *v. 35*. Christ rose from the grave to rise higher, and therefore it must be of his resurrection that David spoke, and not his own, in the 16th Psalm; for there was no occasion for him to rise out of his grave who was not to ascend to heaven.

(4.) The application of this discourse concerning the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

[1.] This explains the meaning of the present wonderful effusion of the Spirit in those extraordinary gifts. Some of the people had asked (*v. 12*), *What meaneth this?* I will tell you the meaning of it, says Peter. *This Jesus being exalted to the right hand of God*, so some read it, to sit there; *exalted by the right hand of God*, so we read it, by his power and authority—it comes all to one; and *having received of the Father*, to whom he has ascended, the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath given what he received (Ps. lxxviii. 18), and *hath shed forth this which you now see and hear*; for the Holy Ghost was to be given when Jesus was glorified, and not before, John vii. 39. You see and hear us speak with tongues that we never learned; probably there was an observable change in the air of their countenances, which they saw, as well as heard the change of their voice and language; now this is from the Holy Ghost, whose coming is an evidence that Jesus is exalted, and he has received this gift from the Father, to confer it upon the church, which plainly bespeaks him to be the Mediator, or middle person between God and the church. *The gift of the Holy Ghost was, First*, A performance of divine promises already made; here it is called the promise of the Holy Ghost; many exceedingly great and precious promises the divine power has given us, but this is the promise, by way of eminency, as that of the Messiah had been, and this is the promise that includes all the rest; hence God's giving the Holy Spirit to those that ask him (Luke xi. 13) is his giving them all good things, Matt. vii. 11. Christ received the promise of the Holy Ghost, that is, the promised gift of the Holy Ghost, and has given it to us; for all the promises are yea and amen in him. *Secondly*, It was a pledge of all divine favours further intended; what you now see and hear is but an earnest of greater things.



[2.] This proves what you are all bound to believe, that Christ Jesus is the true Messiah and Saviour of the world; this he closes his sermon with, as *the conclusion of the whole matter, the quod erat demonstrandum—the truth to be demonstrated* (v. 36): *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that this truth has now received its full confirmation, and we our full commission to publish it, That God has made that same Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ.* They were charged to *tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ* till after his resurrection (Matt. xvi. 20; xvii. 9); but now it must be *proclaimed on the housetops, to all the house of Israel; he that hath ears to hear, let him hear it.* It is not proposed as probable, but deposed as certain: *Let them know it assuredly, and know that it is their duty to receive it as a faithful saying, First, That God has glorified him whom they have crucified.* This aggravates their wickedness, that they crucified one whom God designed to glorify, and put him to death as a deceiver who had given such pregnant proofs of his divine mission; and it magnifies the wisdom and power of God that though they crucified him, and thought thereby to have put him under an indelible mark of infamy, yet God had glorified him, and the indignities they had done him served as a foil to his lustre. *Secondly, That he has glorified him to such a degree as to make him both Lord and Christ:* these signify the same; he is *Lord of all*, and he is not a usurper, but is *Christ, anointed to be so.* He is *one Lord to the Gentiles*, who had had lords many; and *to the Jews he is Messiah*, which includes all his offices. He is *the king Messiah*, as the Chaldee paraphrast calls him; or, as the angel to Daniel, *Messiah the prince*, Dan. ix. 25. This is the great truth of the gospel which we are to believe, *that that same Jesus, the very same that was crucified at Jerusalem, is he to whom we owe allegiance, and from whom we are to expect protection, as Lord and Christ.*

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

We have seen the wonderful effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, in its influence upon the preachers of the gospel. Peter, in all his life, never spoke at the rate that he had done now, with such fullness, perspicuity, and power. We are now to see another blessed fruit of the pouring out of the Spirit in its influence upon the hearers of the gospel. From the first delivery of that divine message, it appeared that there was a divine power going along with it, and *it was mighty, through God, to do wonders:* thousands were immediately brought by it to the *obedience of faith:* it was *the rod of God's strength sent out of Zion*, Ps. cx. 2, 3. We have here the first-fruits of that vast harvest of souls which by it were gathered in to Jesus Christ. Come and see, in these verses, the exalted Redeemer riding forth, in these chariots of salvation, *conquering and to conquer*, Rev. vi. 2.

In these verses we find the word of God the means of beginning and carrying on a good work of grace in the hearts of many, *the Spirit of the Lord working by it.* Let us see the method of it.

I. They were startled, and convinced, and put upon a serious enquiry, v. 37. *When they heard, or having heard*, having patiently heard Peter out, and not given him the interruption they had been used to give to Christ in his discourses (this was one good point gained, that they were become attentive to the word), *they were pricked to the heart, or in the heart*, and, under a deep concern and perplexity, applied themselves to the preachers with this question, *What shall we do?* It was very strange that such impressions should be made upon such hard hearts all of a sudden. They were Jews, bred up in the opinion of the sufficiency of their religion to save them, had lately seen this Jesus crucified in weakness and disgrace, and were told by their rulers that he was a deceiver. Peter had charged them with having a hand, a *wicked hand*, in his death, which was likely to have exasperated them against him; yet, when they heard this plain scriptural sermon, they were much affected with it.

1. It put them in pain: *They were pricked in their hearts.* We read of those that were cut to the heart with indignation at the preacher (ch. vii. 54), but these were *pricked to the heart* with indignation at themselves for having been accessory to the death of Christ. Peter, charging it upon them, awakened their consciences, touched them to the quick, and the reflection they now made upon it was as *a sword in their bones*, it pierced them as they had pierced Christ. Note, Sinners, when their eyes are opened, cannot but be *pricked to the heart* for sin, cannot but experience an inward uneasiness; this is having



the heart rent (Joel ii. 13), a broken and contrite heart, Ps. li. 17. Those that are truly sorry for their sins, and ashamed of them, and afraid of the consequences of them, are pricked to the heart. A prick in the heart is mortal, and under those commotions (says Paul) I died, Rom. vii. 9. "All my good opinion of myself and confidence in myself failed me."

2. It put them upon enquiry. *Out of the abundance of the heart*, thus pricked, *the mouth spoke*. Observe,

(1.) To whom they thus addressed themselves: *To Peter and to the rest of the apostles*, some to one and some to another; to them they opened their case; by them they had been convinced, and therefore by them they expect to be counselled and comforted. They do not appeal from them to the scribes and Pharisees, to justify them against the apostles' charge, but apply to them, as owning the charge, and referring the case to them. They call them *men and brethren*, as Peter had called them (v. 29): it is a style of friendship and love, rather than a title of honour: "You are men, look upon us with humanity; you are brethren, look upon us with brotherly love." Note, Ministers are spiritual physicians; they should be advised with by those whose consciences are wounded; and it is good for people to be free and familiar with those ministers, as men and their brethren, who deal for their souls as for their own.

(2.) What the address is: *What shall we do?* [1.] They speak as men at a stand, that did not know what to do; in a perfect surprise: "Is that Jesus whom we have crucified both Lord and Christ? Then what will become of us who crucified him? We are all undone!" Note, No way of being happy but by seeing ourselves miserable. When we find ourselves in danger of being lost for ever, there is hope of our being made for ever, and not till then. [2.] They speak as men at a point, that were resolved to do any thing they should be directed to immediately; they are not for taking time to consider, nor for adjourning the prosecution of their convictions to a more convenient season, but desire now to be told what they must do to escape the misery they were liable to. Note, Those that are convinced of sin would gladly know the way to peace and pardon, *ch. ix. 6; xvi. 30*.

II. Peter and the other apostles direct them in short what they must do, and what in so doing they might expect, *v. 38, 39*. Sinners convinced must be encouraged; and that which is broken must be bound up (*Ezek. xxxiv. 16*); they must be told that though their case is sad it is not desperate, there is hope for them.

1. He here shows them the course they must take. (1.) *Repent*; this is a plank after shipwreck. "Let the sense of this horrid guilt which you have brought upon yourselves by putting Christ to death awaken you to a penitent reflection upon all your other sins

(as the demand of some one great debt brings to light all the debts of a poor bankrupt) and to bitter remorse and sorrow for them." This was the same duty that John the Baptist and Christ had preached, and now that the Spirit is poured out it is still insisted on: "*Repent, repent*; change your mind, change your way; admit an after-thought." (2.) *Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ*; that is, "firmly believe the doctrine of Christ, and submit to his grace and government; and make an open solemn profession of this, and come under an engagement to abide by it, by submitting to the ordinance of baptism; be proselyted to Christ and to his holy religion, and renounce your infidelity." They must be baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ*. They did believe in the Father and the Holy Ghost speaking by the prophets; but they must also believe in the name of Jesus, that he is the Christ, the Messias promised to the fathers. "Take Jesus for your king, and by baptism swear allegiance to him; take him for your prophet, and hear him; take him for your priest, to make atonement for you," which seems peculiarly intended here; for they must be baptized *in his name for the remission of sins* upon the score of his righteousness. (3.) This is pressed upon each particular person: *Every one of you*. "Even those of you that have been the greatest sinners, if they repent and believe, are welcome to be baptized; and those who think they have been the greatest saints have yet need to repent, and believe, and be baptized. There is grace enough in Christ for every one of you, be you ever so many, and grace suited to the case of every one. Israel of old were baptized unto Moses in the camp, the whole body of the Israelites together, when they passed *through the cloud and the sea* (1 Cor. x. 1, 2), for the covenant of peculiarity was national; but now *every one of you* distinctly must be baptized *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and transact for himself in this great affair." See *Col. i. 28*.

2. He gives them encouragement to take this course:—(1.) "It shall be for *the remission of sins*. Repent of your sin, and it shall not be your ruin; be baptized into the faith of Christ, and in truth you shall be justified, which you could never be by the law of Moses. Aim at this, and depend upon Christ for it, and this you shall have. As the cup in the Lord's supper is the New Testament in the blood of Christ for the remission of sins, so baptism is in the name of Christ for the remission of sins. Be washed, and you shall be washed." (2.) "You shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost as well as we; for it is designed for a general blessing: some of you shall receive these external gifts, and each of you, if you be sincere in your faith and repentance, shall receive his internal graces and comforts, shall be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Note, All that receive the remission of sins receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. All that

are justified are sanctified. (3.) "Your children shall still have, as they have had, an interest in the covenant, and a title to the external seal of it. Come over to Christ, to receive those inestimable benefits; for the promise of the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, is to you and to your children," v. 39. It was very express (Isa. xlv. 3): *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.* And (Isa. lix. 21), *My Spirit and my word shall not depart from thy seed, and thy seed's seed.* When God took Abraham into covenant, he said, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed* (Gen. xvii. 7); and, accordingly, every Israelite had his son circumcised at eight days old. Now it is proper for an Israelite, when he is by baptism to come into a new dispensation of this covenant, to ask, "What must be done with my children? Must they be thrown out, or taken in with me? "Taken in" (says Peter) "by all means; for the promise, that great promise of God's being to you a God, is as much to you and to your children now as ever it was." (4.) "Though the promise is still extended to your children as it has been, yet it is not, as it has been, confined to you and them, but the benefit of it is *designed for all that are afar off*;" we may add, *and their children*, for the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 14. The promise had long pertained to the Israelites (Rom. ix. 4); but now it is sent to those that are *afar off*, the remotest nations of the Gentiles, and *every one of them too, all that are afar off*. To this general the following limitation must refer, *even as many of them*, as many particular persons in each nation, *as the Lord our God shall call* effectually into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Note, God can make his call to reach those that are ever so far off, and none come but those whom he calls.

III. These directions are followed with a needful caution (v. 40): *With many other words*, to the same purport, *did he testify* gospel truths, and exhort to gospel duties; now that the word began to work he followed it; he had said much in a little (v. 38, 39), and that which, one would think, included all, and yet he had more to say. When we have heard those words which have done our souls good, we cannot but wish to hear more, to hear many more such words. Among other things he said (and it should seem inculcated it), *Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Be you free from them.* The unbelieving Jews were an untoward generation, perverse and obstinate; they walked contrary to God and man (1 Thess. ii. 15), wedded to sin and marked for ruin. Now as to them, 1. "Give diligence to save yourselves from their ruin, that you may not be involved in that, and may *escape all those things*" (as the Christians did): "*Repent, and be baptized*; and then you shall not be sharers in destruction with those with whom you have been sharers in sin." *O gather not my*

*soul with sinners.* 2. "In order to this continue not with them in their sin, persist not with them in infidelity. *Save yourselves*, that is, separate yourselves, distinguish yourselves, from this untoward generation. *Be not rebellious like this rebellious house*; partake not with them in their sins, that you share not with them in their plagues." Note, To separate ourselves from wicked people is the only way to save ourselves from them; though we hereby expose ourselves to their rage and enmity, we really save ourselves from them; for, if we consider whither they are hastening, we shall see it is better to have the trouble of swimming against their stream than the danger of being carried down their stream. Those that repent of their sins, and give up themselves to Jesus Christ, must evidence their sincerity by breaking off all intimate society with wicked people. *Depart from me, ye evil doers*, is the language of one that determines to keep the commandments of his God, Ps. cxix. 115. We must *save ourselves* from them, which denotes avoiding them with dread and holy fear, as we would save ourselves from an enemy that seeks to destroy us, or from a house infected with the plague.

IV. Here is the happy success and issue of this, v. 41. The Spirit wrought with the word, and wrought wonders by it. These same persons that had many of them been eye-witnesses of the death of Christ, and the prodigies that attended it, and were not wrought upon by them, were yet wrought upon by the preaching of the word, for it is this that is the *power of God unto salvation*. 1. They received the word; and then only the word does us good, when we do receive it, embrace it, and bid it welcome. They admitted the conviction of it, and accepted the offers of it. 2. They gladly received it. Herod *heard* the word gladly, but these *gladly received* it, were not only glad that they had it to receive, but glad that by the grace of God they were enabled to receive it, though it would be a humbling changing word to them, and would expose them to the enmity of their countrymen. 3. They were baptized; believing with the heart, they made confession with the mouth, and enrolled themselves among the disciples of Christ by that sacred rite and ceremony which he had instituted. And though Peter had said, "Be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (because the doctrine of Christ was the present truth), yet we have reason to think that, in baptizing them, the whole form Christ prescribed was used, *in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*. Note, Those that receive the Christian covenant ought to receive the Christian baptism. 4. Hereby there were added to the disciples to the number of about *three thousand souls that same day*. All those that had received the Holy Ghost had their tongues at work to preach, and their hands at work to baptize; for it was time to be busy, when such a harvest



was to be gathered in. The conversion of these three thousand with these words was *a greater work* than the feeding of four or five thousand with a few loaves. Now Israel began to multiply after the death of our Joseph. They are said to be *three thousand souls* (which word is generally used for persons when women and children are included with men, as Gen. xiv. 21, *margin*, *Give me the souls*; Gen. xvi. 27, *seventy souls*), which intimates that those that were here baptized were not so many men, but so many heads of families as, with their children and servants baptized, might make up *three thousand souls*. These were *added to them*. Note, Those who are joined to Christ are added to the disciples of Christ, and join with them. When we take God for our God, we must take his people to be our people.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that believed, were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

We often speak of the primitive church, and appeal to it, and to the history of it; in these verses we have the history of the *truly primitive church*, of the *first days* of it, its state of infancy indeed, but, like that, the state of its greatest *innocence*.

I. They kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in all instances of piety and devotion, for Christianity, admitted in the power of it, will dispose the soul to communion with God in all those ways wherein he has appointed us to meet him and promised to meet us.

1. They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the *preaching of the word*. They continued in the apostles' doctrine, and never disowned nor deserted it; or, as it may be read, *they continued constant to the apostles' teaching or instruction*; by baptism they were disciplined to be taught, and they were willing to be taught. Note, Those who have given up their names to Christ must make conscience of hearing his word;

for thereby we give honour to him, and build up ourselves in our most holy faith.

2. They kept up the *communion of saints*. They continued in fellowship (v. 42), and continued daily with one accord in the temple, v. 46. They not only had a mutual affection to each other, but a great deal of mutual conversation with each other; they were much together. When they withdrew from the *untoward* generation, they did not turn hermits, but were very intimate with one another, and took all occasions to meet; wherever you saw one disciple, you would see more, like *birds of a feather*. See how these Christians love one another. They were concerned for one another, sympathized with one another, and heartily espoused one another's interests. They had fellowship with one another in religious worship. They met in the temple: there was their rendezvous; for joint-fellowship with God is the best fellowship we can have with one another, 1 John i. 3. Observe, (1.) They were daily in the temple, not only on the days of the sabbaths and solemn feasts, but on other days, every day. Worshipping God is to be our daily work, and, where there is opportunity, the oftener it is done publicly the better. God loves the gates of Zion, and so must we. (2.) They were *with one accord*; not only no discord nor strife, but a great deal of holy love among them; and they heartily joined in their public services. Though they met with the Jews in the courts of the temple, yet the Christians kept together by themselves, and were unanimous in their separate devotions.

3. They frequently joined in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. They continued in the *breaking of bread*, in celebrating that memorial of their Master's death, as those that were not ashamed to own their relation to, and their dependence upon, Christ and him crucified. They could not forget the death of Christ, yet they kept up this memorial of it, and made it their constant practice, because it was an institution of Christ, to be transmitted to the succeeding ages of the church. They broke bread *from house to house*; κατ' οἶκον—house by house; they did not think fit to celebrate the eucharist in the temple, for that was peculiar to the Christian institutes, and therefore they administered that ordinance in private houses, choosing such houses of the converted Christians as were convenient, to which the neighbours resorted; and they went from one to another of these little synagogues or domestic chapels, houses that had churches in them, and there celebrated the eucharist with those that usually met there to worship God.

4. They continued in prayers. After the Spirit was poured out, as well as before, while they were waiting for him, they continued instant in prayer; for prayer will never be superseded till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise. *Breaking of bread* comes in between the word and prayer, for

it has reference to both, and is a help to both. The Lord's supper is a sermon to the eye, and a confirmation of God's word to us; and it is an encouragement to our prayers, and a solemn expression of the ascent of our souls to God.

5. They abounded in thanksgiving; were continually *praising God*, v. 47. This should have a part in every prayer, and not be crowded into a corner. Those that have received the gift of the Holy Ghost will be much in praise.

II. They were loving one to another, and very kind; their charity was as eminent as their piety, and their joining together in holy ordinances knit their hearts to each other, and very much endeared them to one another.

1. They had frequent meetings for Christian converse (v. 44): *All that believed were together*; not all those thousands in one place (this was impracticable); but, as Dr. Lightfoot explains it, they kept together in several companies or congregations, according as their languages, nations, or other associations, brought them and kept them together. And thus joining together, because it was apart from those that believed not, and because it was in the same profession and practice of the duties of religion, they are said to be together, *ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ*. They associated together, and so both expressed and increased their mutual love.

2. They had *all things common*; perhaps they had common tables (as the Spartans of old), for familiarity, temperance and freedom of conversation; they *ate together*, that those who had much might have the less, and so be kept from the temptations of abundance; and they who had little might have the more, and so be kept from the temptations of want and poverty. Or, There was such a concern for one another, and such a readiness to help one another as there was occasion, that it might be said, They had *all things common*, according to the law of friendship; one wanted not what another had; for he might have it for the asking.

3. They were very cheerful, and very generous in the use of what they had. Besides the religion that was in their sacred feasts, (their *breaking bread from house to house*) a great deal of it appeared in their common meals; they *did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*. They brought the comforts of *God's table* along with them to *their own*, which had two good effects upon them:—(1.) It made them very pleasant, and enlarged their hearts with holy joy; they did eat their bread with joy, and *drank their wine with a merry heart*, as knowing that *God now accepted their works*. None have such cause to be cheerful as good Christians have; it is a pity but that they should always have hearts to be so. (2.) It made them very liberal to their poor brethren, and enlarged their hearts in charity. They did *eat their meat with singleness of heart*, i.e.

*ἀφελότητι καρδίας*—with *liberality of heart*; so some: they did not eat their morsels alone, but bade the poor welcome to their table, not grudgingly, but with all the hearty freedom imaginable. Note, It becomes Christians to be open-hearted and open-handed, and in every good work to sow plentifully, as those on whom God hath sown plentifully, and who hope to reap so.

4. They raised a fund for charity (v. 45): *They sold their possessions and goods*; some sold their lands and houses, others their stocks and the furniture of their houses, and *parted the money to their brethren, as every man had need*. This was to destroy, not property (as Mr. Baxter says), but selfishness. Herein, probably, they had an eye to the command which Christ gave to the rich man, as a test of his sincerity, *Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor*. Not that this was intended for an example to be a constant binding rule, as if all Christians in all places and ages were bound to sell their estates, and give away the money in charity. For St. Paul's epistles, after this, often speak of the distinction of rich and poor, and Christ hath said that *the poor we always have with us*, and shall have, and the rich must be always doing them good out of the rents, issues, and profits, of their estates, which they disable themselves to do, if they sell them, and give all away at once. But here the case was extraordinary (1.) They were under no obligation of a divine command to do this, as appears by what Peter said to Ananias (ch. v. 4): *Was it not in thine own power?* But it was a very commendable instance of their raisedness above the world, their contempt of it, their assurance of another world, their love to their brethren, their compassion to the poor, and their great zeal for the encouraging of Christianity, and the nursing of it in its infancy. The apostles left all to follow Christ, and were to give themselves wholly to the word and prayer, and something must be done for their maintenance; so that this extraordinary liberality was like that of Israel in the wilderness towards the building of the tabernacle, which needed to be restrained, Exod. xxxvi. 5, 6. Our rule is, to give according as God has blessed us; yet, in such an extraordinary case as this, those are to be praised who give *beyond their power*, 2 Cor. viii. 3. (2.) They were Jews that did this, and those who believed Christ must believe that the Jewish nation would shortly be destroyed, and an end put to the possession of estates and goods in it, and, in the belief of this, they sold them for the present service of Christ and his church.

III. God owned them, and gave them signal tokens of his presence with them (v. 43): *Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles of divers sorts*, which confirmed their doctrine, and incontestably proved that it was from God. Those that could work miracles could have maintained them-



selves and the poor that were among them miraculously, as Christ fed thousands with a little food; but it was as much for the glory of God that it should be done by a miracle of grace (inclining people to sell their estates, to do it) as if it had been done by a miracle in nature.

But the Lord's giving them power to work miracles was not all he did for them; he *added to the church daily*. The word in their mouths *did wonders*, and God blessed their endeavours for the increase of the number of believers. Note, It is God's work to add souls to the church; and it is a great comfort both to ministers and Christians to see it.

IV. The people were influenced by it; those that were without, the standers by, that were spectators. 1. They *feared them*, and had a veneration for them (v. 43): *Fear came upon every soul*, that is, upon very many who saw the *wonders and signs* done by the apostles, and were afraid lest their not being respected as they should be would bring desolation upon their nation. The common people stood in awe of them, as Herod feared John. Though they had nothing of external pomp to command external respect, as the *scribes' long robes* gained them the *greetings in the market-places*, yet they had abundance of spiritual gifts that were truly honourable, which possessed men with an inward reverence for them. Fear came upon *every soul*; the *souls* of people were strangely influenced by their awful preaching and living. 2. They *favoured them*. Though we have reason to think there were those that despised them and hated them (we are sure the Pharisees and chief priests did), yet far the greater part of the common people had a kindness for them—they *had favour with all the people*. Christ was so violently run upon and run down by a *packed mob*, which cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*, that one would think his doctrine and followers were never likely to have an interest in the common people any more. And yet here we find them *in favour with them all*, by which it appears that their prosecuting Christ was a sort of force put upon them by the artifices of the priests; now they returned to their wits, to their right mind. Note, Undissembled piety and charity will command respect; and cheerfulness in serving God will recommend religion to those that are without. Some read it, *They had charity to all the people*—*χάριν ἔχοντες πρὸς ὅλον τὸν λαόν*—they did not confine their charity to those of their own community, but it was *catholic and extensive*; and this recommended them very much. 3. They *fell over to them*. Some or other were daily coming in, though not so many as the first day; and they were such as *should be saved*. Note, Those that God has designed for eternal salvation shall one time or other be effectually brought to Christ—and those that are brought to Christ are

*added to the church* in a holy covenant by baptism, and in holy communion by other ordinances.

## CHAP. III.

In this chapter we have a miracle and a sermon: the miracle wrought to make way for the sermon, to confirm the doctrine that was to be preached, and to make way for it into the minds of the people; and then the sermon to explain the miracle, and to sow the ground which by it was broken up. 1. The miracle was the healing of a man that was lame from his birth, with a word speaking (ver. 1–8), and the impression which this made upon the people, ver. 9–11. 11. The scope of the sermon which was preached hereupon was to bring people to Christ, to repent of their sin in crucifying him (ver. 12–19), to believe in him now that he was glorified, and to comply with the Father's design in glorifying him, ver. 20–26. The former part of the discourse opens the wound, the latter applies the remedy.

**N**OW Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being the ninth hour*. 2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; 3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. 4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. 5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. 6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. 11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

We were told in general (ch. ii. 43) that *many signs and wonders were done by the apostles*, which are not written in this book; but here we have one given us for an instance. As they wrought miracles, not upon every body as every body had occasion for them, but as the Holy Spirit gave direction, so as to answer the end of their commission; so all the miracles they did work are not written

in this book, but such only are recorded as the Holy Ghost thought fit, to answer the end of this sacred history.

I. The persons by whose ministry this miracle was wrought were Peter and John, two principal men among the apostles; they were so in Christ's time, one speaker of the house for the most part, the other favourite of the Master; and they continue so. When, upon the conversion of thousands, the church was divided into several societies, perhaps Peter and John presided in that which Luke associated with, and therefore he is more particular in recording what they said and did, as afterwards what Paul said and did when he attended him, both the one and the other being designed for specimens of what the other apostles did.

Peter and John had each of them a brother among the twelve, with whom they were coupled when they were sent out; yet now they seem to be knit together more closely than either of them to his brother, for the bond of friendship is sometimes stronger than that of relation: *there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother*. Peter and John seem to have had a peculiar intimacy after Christ's resurrection more than before, John xx. 2. The reason of which (if I may have liberty to conjecture) might be this, that John, a disciple made up of love, was more compassionate to Peter upon his fall and repentance, and more tender of him in his *bitter weeping* for his sin, than any other of the apostles were, and more solicitous to restore him in the *spirit of meekness*, which made him very dear to Peter ever after; and it was good evidence of Peter's acceptance with God, upon his repentance, that Christ's favourite was made his bosom friend. David prayed, after his fall, *Let those that fear thee turn unto me*, Ps. cxix. 79.

II. The time and place are here set down. 1. It was in the temple, whither Peter and John went up together, because it was the place of concourse; there were the shoals of fish among which the net of the gospel was to be cast, especially during the days of pentecost, within the compass of which we may suppose this to have happened. Note, It is good to go up to the temple, to attend on public ordinances; and it is comfortable to go up together to the temple: *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go*. The best society is society in worshipping God. 2. It was at the hour of prayer, one of the hours of public worship commonly appointed and observed among the Jews. Time and place are two necessary circumstances of every action, which must be determined by consent, as is most convenient for edification. With reference to public worship, there must be a house of prayer and an hour of prayer the ninth hour, that is, three o'clock in the afternoon, was one of the hours of prayer among the Jews; nine in the morning and twelve at noon were the other two. See Ps. lv. 17:

Dan. vi. 10. It is of use for private Christians so far to have their hours of prayer as may serve, though not to bind, yet to remind, conscience: *every thing is beautiful in its season*.

III. The patient on whom this miraculous cure was wrought is here described, v. 2. He was a poor lame beggar at the temple gate. 1. He was a cripple, not by accident, but born so; he was *lame from his mother's womb*, as it should seem, by a paralytic distemper, which weakened his limbs; for it is said in the description of his cure (v. 7), *His feet and ankle bones received strength*. Some such piteous cases now and then there are, which we ought to be affected with and look upon with compassion, and which are designed to show us what we all are by nature spiritually: *without strength*, lame from our birth, unable to work or walk in God's service. 2. He was a beggar. Being unable to work for his living, he must live upon alms; such are God's poor. He was *laid daily* by his friends at one of the gates of the temple, a miserable spectacle, unable to do any thing for himself but to ask alms of those that entered into the temple or came out. There was a concourse,—a concourse of devout good people, from whom charity might be expected, and a concourse of such people when it might be hoped they were in the best frame; and there he was laid. Those that need, and cannot work, must not be ashamed to beg. He would not have been laid there, and laid there daily, if he had not been used to meet with supplies, daily supplies there. Note, Our prayers and our alms should go together; Cornelius's did, ch. x. 4. Objects of charity should be in a particular manner welcome to us when we go up to the temple to pray; it is a pity that common beggars at church doors should any of them be of such a character as to discourage charity; but they ought not always to be overlooked: some there are surely that merit regard, and better feed ten drones, yea, and some wasps, than let one bee starve. The gate of the temple at which he was laid is here named: it was called *Beautiful*, for the extraordinary splendour and magnificence of it. Dr. Lightfoot observes that this was the gate that led out of the court of the Gentiles into that of the Jews, and he supposes that the cripple would beg only of the Jews, as disdaining to ask any thing of the Gentiles. But Dr. Whitby takes it to be at the first entrance into the temple, and beautified sumptuously, as became the frontispiece of that place where the divine Majesty vouchsafed to dwell; and it was no diminution to the beauty of this gate that a poor man lay there begging. 3. He begged of Peter and John (v. 3), begged an alms; this was the utmost he expected from them, who had the reputation of being charitable men, and who, though they had not much, yet did good with what they had. It was not many weeks ago



that the blind and the lame came to Christ in the temple, and were healed there, Matt. xxi. 14. And why might not he have asked more than an alms, if he knew that Peter and John were Christ's messengers, and preached and wrought miracles in his name? But he had that done for him which he looked not for; he asked an alms, and had a cure.

IV. We have here the method of the cure.

1. His expectations were raised. Peter, instead of turning his eyes from him, as many do from objects of charity, turned his eyes to him, nay, he fastened his eyes upon him, that his eye might affect his heart with compassion towards him, v. 4. John did so too, for they were both guided by one and the same Spirit, and concurred in this miracle; they said, *Look on us*. Our eye must be ever towards the Lord (the eye of our mind), and, in token of this, the eye of the body may properly be fixed on those whom he employs as the ministers of his grace. This man needed not to be bidden twice to look on the apostles; for he justly thought this gave him cause to expect that he should receive something from them, and therefore he gave heed to them, v. 5. Note, We must come to God both to attend on his word and to apply ourselves to him in prayer, with hearts fixed and expectations raised. We must look up to heaven and expect to receive benefit by that which God speaks thence, and an answer of peace to the prayers sent up thither. *I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

2. His expectation of an alms was disappointed. Peter said, "*Silver and gold have I none, and therefore none to give thee;*" yet he intimated that if he had had any he would have given him an alms, not brass, but silver or gold. Note, (1.) It is not often that Christ's friends and favourites have abundance of the wealth of this world. The apostles were very poor, had but just enough for themselves, and no overplus. Peter and John had abundance of money laid at their feet, but this was appropriated to the maintenance of the poor of the church, and they would not convert any of it to their own use, nor dispose of it otherwise than according to the intention of the donors. Public trusts ought to be strictly and faithfully observed. (2.) Many who are well inclined to works of charity are yet not in a capacity of doing any thing considerable, while others, who have wherewithal to do much, have not a heart to do any thing.

3. His expectations, notwithstanding, were quite outdone. Peter had no money to give him; but, (1.) He had that which was better, such an interest in heaven, such a power from heaven, as to be able to cure his disease. Note, Those who are poor in the world may yet be rich, very rich, in spiritual gifts, graces, and comforts; certainly there is that which we are capable of possessing which is infinitely better than silver and

gold; the merchandise and gain of it are better, Job xxviii. 12, &c.; Prov. iii. 14, &c.

(2.) He gave him that which was better—the cure of his disease, which he would gladly have given a great deal of silver and gold for, if he had had it, and the cure could have been so obtained. This would enable him to work for his living, so that he would not need to beg any more; nay, he would have to give to those that needed, and it is more blessed to give than to receive. A miraculous cure would be a greater instance of God's favour, and would put a greater honour upon him, than thousands of gold and silver could. Observe, When Peter had no silver and gold to give, yet (says he) *such as I have I give thee*. Note, Those may be, and ought to be, otherwise charitable and helpful to the poor, who have not wherewithal to give in charity; those who have not silver and gold have their limbs and senses, and with these may be serviceable to the blind, and lame, and sick, and if they be not, as there is occasion, neither would they give to them if they had silver and gold. *As every one hath received the gift, so let him minister it*. Let us now see how the cure was wrought. [1.] Christ sent his word, and healed him (Ps. cvii. 20); for healing grace is given by the word of Christ; this is the vehicle of the healing virtue derived from Christ. Christ spoke cures by himself; the apostles spoke them in his name. Peter bids a lame man *rise up and walk*, which would have been a banter upon him if he had not premised in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth: "I say it by warrant from him, and it shall be done by power from him, and all the glory and praise of it shall be ascribed to him." He calls Christ *Jesus of Nazareth*, which was a name of reproach, to intimate that the indignities done him on earth served but as a foil to his glories now that he was in heaven. "Give him what name you will, call him if you will in scorn Jesus of Nazareth, in that name you shall see wonders done; for, because he humbled himself, thus highly was he exalted." He bids the cripple *rise up and walk*, which does not prove that he had power in himself to do it, but that if he attempt to rise and walk, and, in a sense of his own impotency, depend upon a divine power to enable him to do it, he shall be enabled; and by rising and walking he must evidence that that power has wrought upon him; and then let him take the comfort, and let God have the praise. Thus it is in the healing of our souls, which are spiritually impotent. [2.] Peter lent his hand, and helped him (v. 7). He took him by the right hand, in the same name in which he had spoken to him to arise and walk, and lifted him up. Not that this could contribute any thing to his cure; but it was a sign, plainly intimating the help he should receive from God, if he exerted himself as he was bidden. When God by his word commands us to

rise, and walk in the way of his commandments, if we mix faith with that word, and lay our souls under the power of it, he will give his Spirit to take us by the hand, and lift us up. If we set ourselves to do what we can, God has promised his grace to enable us to do what we cannot; and by that promise we partake of a new nature, and that grace shall not be in vain; it was not here: *His feet and ankle-bones received strength*, which they had not done if he had not attempted to rise, and been helped up; he does his part, and Peter does his, and yet it is Christ that does all: it is he that puts strength into him. As the bread was multiplied in the breaking, and the water turned into wine in the pouring out, so strength was given to the cripple's feet in his stirring them and using them.

V. Here is the impression which this cure made upon the patient himself, which we may best conceive of if we put our soul into his soul's stead. 1. He leaped up, in obedience to the command, *Arise*. He found in himself such a degree of strength in his feet and ankle-bones that he did not steal up gently, with fear and trembling, as weak people do when they begin to recover strength; but he started up, as one refreshed with sleep, boldly, and with great agility, and as one that questioned not his own strength. The incomes of strength were sudden, and he was no less sudden in showing them. He leaped, as one glad to quit the bed or pad of straw on which he had lain so long lame. 2. He stood, and walked. He stood without either leaning or trembling, stood straight up, and walked without a staff. He trod strongly, and moved steadily; and this was to manifest the cure, and that it was a thorough cure. Note, Those who have had experience of the working of divine grace upon them should evidence what they have experienced. Has God put strength into us? Let us stand before him in the exercises of devotion; let us walk before him in all the instances of a religious conversation. Let us stand up resolutely for him, and walk cheerfully with him, and both in strength derived and received from him. 3. He held Peter and John, v. 11. We need not ask why he held them. I believe he scarcely knew himself: but it was in a transport of joy that he embraced them as the best benefactors he had ever met with, and hung upon them to a degree of rudeness; he would not let them go forward, but would have them stay with him, while he published to all about him what God had done for him by them. Thus he testified his affection to them; he held them, and would not let them go. Some suggest that he clung to them for fear lest, if they should leave him, his lameness should return. Those whom God hath healed love those whom he made instruments of their healing, and see the need of their further

help. 4. He entered with them into the temple. His strong affection to them held them; but it could not hold them so fast as to keep them out of the temple, whither they were going to preach Christ. We should never suffer ourselves to be diverted by the most affectionate kindnesses of our friends from going in the way of our duty. But, if they will not stay with him, he is resolved to go with them, and the rather because they are going into the temple, whence he had been so long kept by his weakness and his begging: like the impotent man whom Christ cured, he was presently found in the temple, John v. 14. He went into the temple, not only to offer up his praises and thanksgivings to God, but to hear more from the apostles of that Jesus in whose name he had been healed. Those that have experienced the power of Christ should earnestly desire to grow in their acquaintance with Christ. 5. He was there walking, and leaping, and praising God. Note, The strength God has given us, both in mind and body, should be made use of to his praise, and we should study how to honour him with it. Those that are healed in his name must walk up and down in his name and in his strength, Zech. x. 12. This man, as soon as he could leap, leaped for joy in God, and praised him. Here was that scripture fulfilled (Isa. xxxv. 6): *Then shall the lame man leap as a hart*. Now that this man was newly cured he was in this excess of joy and thankfulness. All true converts walk and praise God; but perhaps young converts leap more in his praises.

VI. How the people that were eye-witnesses of this miracle were influenced by it we are next told. 1. They were entirely satisfied in the truth of the miracle, and had nothing to object against it. *They knew it was he that sat begging at the beautiful gate of the temple*, v. 10. He had sat there so long that they all knew him; and for this reason he was chosen to be the vessel of this mercy. Now they were not so perverse as to make any doubt whether he was the same man, as the Pharisees had questioned concerning the blind man that Christ cured, John ix. 9, 18. They now saw him walking, and praising God (v. 9), and perhaps took notice of a change in his mind; for he was now as loud in praising God as he had before been in begging relief. The best evidence that it was a complete cure was that he praised God for it. Mercies are then perfected, when they are sanctified. 2. They were astonished at it: *They were filled with wonder and amazement* (v. 10); *greatly wondering*, v. 11. They were in an *ecstasy*. There seems to have been this effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, that the people, at least those in Jerusalem, were much more affected with the miracles the apostles wrought than they had been with those of the same kind that had been wrought by



Christ himself; and this was in order to the miracles answering their end. 3. They gathered about Peter and John: *All the people ran together unto them in Solomon's porch:* some only to gratify their curiosity with the sight of men that had such power; others with a desire to hear them preach, concluding that their doctrine must needs be of divine origin, which thus had a divine ratification. They flocked to them in Solomon's porch, a part of the court of the Gentiles, where Solomon had built the outer porch of the temple; or, some cloisters or piazzas which Herod had erected upon the same foundation upon which Solomon had built the stately porch that bore his name, Herod being ambitious herein to be a second Solomon. Here the people met, to see this great sight.

12 And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers. 18 But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said unto

the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23 And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

We have here the sermon which Peter preached after he had cured the lame man. *When Peter saw it.* 1. When he saw the people got together in a crowd, he took that opportunity to preach Christ to them, especially the temple being the place of their concourse, and Solomon's porch there: let them come and hear a more excellent wisdom than Solomon's, for, behold, a greater than Solomon is here preached. 2. When he saw the people affected with the miracle, and filled with admiration, then he sowed the gospel seed in the ground which was thus broken up, and prepared to receive it. 3. When he saw the people ready to adore him and John, he stepped in immediately, and diverted their respect from them, that it might be directed to Christ only; to this *he answered* presently, as Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. See *ch. xiv. 14, 15.* In the sermon,

I. He humbly disclaims the honour of the miracle as not due to them, who were only the ministers of Christ, or instruments in his hand for the doing of it. The doctrines they preached were not of their own invention, nor were the seals of it their own, but his whose the doctrines were. He addresses himself to them as *men of Israel*, men to whom pertained, not only the law and the promises, but the gospel and the performances, and who were nearly interested in the present dispensation. Two things he asks them:—1. Why they were so surprised at the miracle itself: *Why marvel you at this?* It was indeed marvellous, and they justly wondered at it, but it was no more than what Christ had done many a time, and they had not duly regarded it, nor been affected with it. It was but a little before that Christ had *raised Lazarus from the dead*; and why should this then seem so

strange? Note, Stupid people think that strange now which might have been familiar to them if it had not been their own fault. Christ had lately risen from the dead himself; why did they not marvel at this? why were they not convinced by this? 2. Why they gave so much of the praise of it to them, who were only the instruments of it: *Why look you so earnestly on us?* (1.) It was certain that they *had made this man to walk*, by which it appeared that the apostles not only were sent of God, but were sent to be blessings to the world, benefactors to mankind, and were sent to heal sick and distempered souls, that were spiritually lame and impotent, to set broken bones, and make them rejoice. (2.) Yet they did not do it by any *power or holiness of their own*. It was not done by any might of their own, any skill they had in physic or surgery, nor any virtue in their word: the power they did it by was wholly derived from Christ. Nor was it done by any merit of their own; the power which Christ gave them to do it they had not deserved: it was not by their own holiness; for, as they were weak things, so they were foolish things, that Christ chose to employ; Peter was a sinful man. What holiness had Judas? Yet he wrought miracles in Christ's name. What holiness any of them had it was wrought in them, and they could not pretend to merit by it. (3.) It was the people's fault that they attributed it to their power and holiness, and accordingly looked at them. Note, The instruments of God's favour to us, though they must be respected, must not be idolized; we must take heed of reckoning that to be done by the instrument which God is the author of. (4.) It was the praise of Peter and John that they would not take the honour of this miracle to themselves, but carefully transmitted it to Christ. Useful men must see to it that they be very humble. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory*. Every crown must be cast at the feet of Christ; *not I, but the grace of God with me*.

II. He preaches Christ to them; this was his business, that he might lead them into obedience to Christ.

1. He preaches Christ, as the true Messiah promised to the fathers (v. 13); for, (1.) He is Jesus the Son of God; though they had lately condemned Christ as a blasphemer for saying that he was the Son of God, yet Peter avows it: he is *his Son Jesus*; to him dear as a Son; to us, *Jesus*, a Saviour. (2.) God hath glorified him, in raising him up to be king, priest, and prophet, of his church; he glorified him in his life and in his death, as well as in his resurrection and ascension. (3.) He hath glorified him as *the God of our fathers*, whom he names with respect (for they were great names with the men of Israel, and justly), *the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob*. God sent him into the world, pursuant to the promises made to

those patriarchs, *that in their seed the families of the earth should be blessed*, and the covenant made with them, *that God would be a God to them, and their seed*. The apostles call the patriarchs their fathers, and God the God of those patriarchs from whom the Jews were descended, to intimate to them that they had no evil design upon the Jewish nation (that they should look upon them with a jealous eye), but had a value and concern for it, and were hereby well-wishers to it; and the gospel they preached was the revelation of the mind and will of the God of Abraham. See *ch. xxvi. 7, 22*; *Luke i. 72, 73*.

2. He charges them flatly and plainly with the murder of this Jesus, as he had done before. (1.) "*You delivered him up to your chief priests and elders, the representative body of the nation; and you of the common people were influenced by them to clamour against him, as if he had been a public grievance.*" (2.) "*You denied him, and you disowned him, would not have him then to be your king, could not look upon him as the Messiah, because he came not in external pomp and power; you denied him in the presence of Pilate, renounced all the expectations of your church, in the presence of the Roman governor, who justly laughed at you for it; you denied him against the face of Pilate*" (so Dr. Hammond), "in defiance of his reasonings with you" (*Pilate had determined to let him go, but the people opposed it, and overruled him*). "You were worse than Pilate, for he would have released him, if you had let him follow his own judgment. *You denied the holy One and the Just*, who had approved himself so, and all the malice of his persecutors could not disprove it." The holiness and justice of the Lord Jesus, which are something more than his innocency, were a great aggravation of the sin of those that put him to death. (3.) "*You desired a murderer to be released, and Christ crucified; as if Barabbas had deserved better at your hands than the Lord Jesus, than which a greater affront could not be put upon him.*" (4.) *You killed the prince of life*. Observe the antithesis: "You preserved a murderer, a destroyer of life; and destroyed the Saviour, the author of life. *You killed him* who was sent to be to you the prince of life, and so not only forsook, but rebelled against your own mercies. You did an ungrateful thing, in taking away his life who would have been your life. You did a foolish thing to think you could conquer the prince of life, who has life in himself, and would soon resume the life he resigned."

3. He attests his resurrection as before, *ch. ii. 32*. "You thought the prince of life might be deprived of his life, as any other prince might be deprived of his dignity and dominion, but you found yourselves mistaken, for God raised him from the dead; so that in putting him to death you fought against God, and were baffled. *God raised him from*



the dead, and thereby ratified his demands, and confirmed his doctrine, and rolled away all the reproach of his sufferings, and for the truth of his resurrection we are all witnesses."

4. He ascribes the cure of this impotent man to the power of Christ (v. 16): *His name, through faith in his name*, in that discovery which he hath made of himself, *has made this man strong*. He repeats it again, *The faith which is by him hath given him this soundness*. Here, (1.) He appeals to themselves concerning the truth of the miracle; the man on whom it was wrought is one *whom you see, and know, and have known*; he was not acquainted with Peter and John before, so that there was no room to suspect a compact between them: "You know him to have been a cripple from a child. The miracle was wrought publicly, *in the presence of you all*; not in a corner, but in the gate of the temple; you saw in what manner it was done, so that there could be no juggle in it; you had liberty to examine it immediately, and may yet. The cure is complete; it is a *perfect soundness*; you see the man walks and leaps, as one that has no remainder either of weakness or pain." (2.) He acquaints them with the power by which it was wrought. [1.] It is done by the name of Christ, not merely by naming it as a spell or charm, but it is done by us as professors and teachers of his name, by virtue of a commission and instructions we have received from him, and a power which he has invested us with, that name which Christ has above every name; his authority, his command has done it; as writs run in the king's name, though it is an inferior officer that executes them. [2.] The power of Christ is fetched in *through faith in his name*, a confidence in him, a dependence on him, a believing application to him, and expectation from him, even *that faith which is, δὲ αὐτοῦ—by him*, which is of his working; *it is not of ourselves, it is the gift of Christ*; and it is for his sake, that he may have the glory of it; for he is both the *author and finisher of our faith*. Dr. Lightfoot suggests that faith is twice named in this verse, because of the apostles' faith in doing this miracle and the cripple's faith in receiving it; but I suppose it relates chiefly, if not only, to the former. Those that wrought this miracle by faith derived power from Christ to work it, and therefore returned all the glory to him. By this true and just account of the miracle, Peter both confirmed the great gospel truth they were to preach to the world—that Jesus Christ is the fountain of all power and grace, and the great healer and Saviour—and recommended the great gospel duty of faith in him as the only way of receiving benefit by him. It explains likewise the great gospel mystery of our salvation by Christ; it is his name that justifies us, that glorious name of his, *The Lord our righteousness*; but we, in particular, are justified by that name, through faith in it, applying it to ourselves. Thus

does Peter preach unto them Jesus, and him crucified, as a faithful friend of the bridegroom, to whose service and honour he devoted all his interest.

III. He encourages them to hope that, though they had been guilty of putting Christ to death, yet they might find mercy; he does all he can to convince them, yet is careful not to drive them to despair. The guilt was very great, but, 1. He mollifies their crime by a candid imputation of it to their ignorance. Perhaps he perceived by the countenance of his hearers that they were struck with great horror when he told them that they had *killed the prince of life*, and were ready either to sink down or to fly off, and therefore he saw it needful to mitigate the rigour of the charge by calling them *brethren*; and well might he call them so, for he had been himself a brother with them in this iniquity: he had *denied the holy One and the Just*, and sworn that he did not know him; he did it by surprise; "and, for your parts, *I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers*," v. 17. This was the language of Peter's charity, and teaches us to make the best of those whom we desire to make better. Peter had searched the wound to the bottom, and now he begins to think of healing it up, in order to which it is necessary to beget in them a good opinion of their physician; and could any thing be more winning than this? That which bears him out in it is that he has the example of his Master's praying for his crucifiers, and pleading in their behalf that they knew not what they did. And it is said of the rulers that *if they had known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*. See 1 Cor. ii. 8. Perhaps some of the rulers, and of the people, did therein rebel against the light and the convictions of their own consciences, and did it through malice; but the generality went down the stream, and did it through ignorance; as Paul persecuted the church, *ignorantly, and in unbelief*, 1 Tim. i. 13. 2. He mollifies the effects of their crime—the death of the *prince of life*; this sounds very dreadful, but it was according to the scriptures (v. 18), the predictions of which, though they did not necessitate their sin, yet did necessitate his sufferings; so he himself saith: *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer. You did it through ignorance* may be taken in this sense: "You fulfilled the scripture, and did not know it; God, by your hands, *hath fulfilled what he showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer*;" this was his design in delivering him up to you, but you had views of your own, and were altogether ignorant of this design; *you meant not so, neither did your heart think so*. God was fulfilling the scripture when you were gratifying your own passions." Observe, It was not only determined in the secret counsel of God, but declared to the world many ages before, *by the mouth and pen of the prophets, that Christ*

*should suffer*, in order to the accomplishment of his undertaking; and it was God himself that *showed* it by them, who will see that his words be made good; what he showed he fulfilled, he so fulfilled as he had shown, punctually and exactly, without any variation. Now, though this is no extenuation at all of their sin in hating and persecuting Christ to the death (this still appears exceedingly sinful), yet it was an encouragement to them to repent, and hope for mercy upon their repentance; not only because in general God's gracious designs were carried on by it (and thus it agrees with the encouragement Joseph gave to his brethren, when they thought their offence against him almost unpardonable: *Fear not, saith he, you thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good*, Gen. i. 15, 20), but because in particular the death and sufferings of Christ were for *the remission of sins*, and the ground of that display of mercy for which he now encouraged them to hope.

IV. He exhorts them all to turn Christians, and assures them it would be unspeakably for their advantage to do so; it would be the making of them for ever. This is the application of his sermon.

1. He tells them what they must believe.

(1.) They must believe that Jesus Christ is the promised seed, that seed in which God had told Abraham *all the kindreds of the earth should be blessed*, v. 25. This refers to that promise made to Abraham (Gen. xii. 3), which promise was long ere it was fulfilled, but now at length had its accomplishment in this Jesus, who was of the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, and in him all the families of the earth are blessed, and not the families of Israel only; all have some benefits by him, and some have all benefits. (2.) They must believe that Jesus Christ is a prophet, *that prophet like unto Moses* whom God had promised to raise up to them from among their brethren, v. 22. This refers to that promise, Deut. xviii. 18. Christ is a prophet, for by him God speaks unto us; in him all divine revelation centres, and by him it is handed to us; he is a *prophet like unto Moses*, a favourite of Heaven; more intimately acquainted with the divine counsel, and more familiarly conversed with, than any other prophet. He was a deliverer of his people out of bondage, and their guide through the wilderness, like Moses; a prince and a lawgiver, like Moses; the builder of the true tabernacle, as Moses was of the typical one. Moses was faithful as a servant, Christ as a Son. Moses was murdered against by Israel, defied by Pharaoh, yet God owned him, and ratified his commission. Moses was a pattern of meekness and patience, so is Christ. Moses died by the word of the Lord, so did Christ. *There was no prophet like unto Moses* (Num. xii. 6, 7; Deut. xxxiv. 10), but a greater than Moses is here where Christ is. He is a pro-

phet of God's raising up, for he took not this honour of himself, but was called of God to it. He was raised up unto Israel in the first place. He executed this office in his own person among them only. They had the first offer of divine grace made to them; and therefore he was raised up from among them—of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, which, as it was a great honour done to them, so it was both an obligation upon them and an encouragement to them to embrace him. If he come to his own, one would think, they should receive him. The Old-Testament church was blessed with many prophets, with schools of prophets, for many ages with a constant succession of prophets (which is here taken notice of, from Samuel, and those that follow after, v. 24, for from Samuel the prophetic era commenced); but, these servants being abused, last of all God sent them his Son, who had been in his bosom. (3.) They must believe that times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord (v. 19), and that they will be the times of the restitution of all things, v. 21. There is a future state, another life after this; those times will come from the presence of the Lord, from his glorious appearance at that day, his coming at the end of time. The absence of the Lord occasions many of the securities of sinners and the distrusts of saints; but his presence is hastening on, which will for ever silence both. *Behold, the Judge standeth before the door*. The presence of the Lord will introduce, [1.] *The restitution of all things* (v. 21), *the new heavens, and the new earth*, which will be the product of the dissolution of all things (Rev. xxi. 1), the renovation of the whole creation, which is that which it grieves after, as its present burden under the sin of man is that which it groans under. Some understand this of a state on this side the end of time; but it is rather to be understood of that end of all things which God hath spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began; for this is that which Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of (Jude 14), and the temporal judgments which the other prophets foretold were typical of that which the apostle calls *the eternal judgment*. This is more clearly and plainly revealed in the New Testament than it had been before, and all that receive the gospel have an expectation of it. [2.] With this will come the times of refreshing (v. 19), of consolation to the Lord's people like a cool shade to those that have borne the burden and heat of the day. All Christians look for a rest that remains for the people of God, after the travails and toils of their present state, and, with the prospect of this, they are borne up under their present sufferings and carried on in their present services. The refreshing that then comes from the presence of the Lord will continue eternally in the presence of the Lord



2. He tells them what they must do. (1.) They must *repent*, must bethink themselves of what they have done amiss, must return to their right mind, admit a second thought, and submit to the convictions of it; they must begin anew. Peter, who had himself denied Christ, repented, and he would have them to do so too. (2.) They must be *converted*, must face about, and direct both their faces and steps the contrary way to what they had been; they must *return to the Lord their God*, from whom they had revolted. It is not enough to repent of sin, but we must be converted from it, and not return to it again. They must not only exchange the profession of Judaism for that of Christianity, but the power and dominion of a carnal, worldly, sensual mind, for that of holy, heavenly, and divine principles and affections. (3.) They must hear Christ, the great prophet: "*Him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.*" Attend his dictates, receive his doctrine, submit to his government. Hear him with a divine faith, as prophets should be heard, that come with a divine commission. *Him shall you hear*, and to him shall you subscribe with an implicit faith and obedience. *Hear him in all things*; let his laws govern all your actions, and his counsels determine all your submissions. Whenever he has a mouth to speak, you must have an ear to hear. Whatever he saith to you, though ever so displeasing to flesh and blood, bid it welcome." *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.* A good reason is here given why we should be observant of, and obedient to, the word of Christ; for it is at our peril if we turn a deaf ear to his call and a stiff neck to his yoke (v. 23): *Every soul that will not hear that prophet*, and be directed by what he saith, *shall be destroyed from among the people.* The destruction of the city and nation, by war and famine, was threatened for slighting the prophets of the Old Testament; but the destruction of the soul, a spiritual and eternal destruction, is threatened for slighting Christ, *this great prophet.* Those that will not be advised by the Saviour can expect no other than to fall into the hands of the destroyer.

3. He tells them what they might expect.

(1.) That they should have the pardon of their sins; this is always spoken of as the great privilege of all those that embrace the gospel (v. 19): *Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* This implies, [1.] That the remission of sin is the blotting of it out, as a cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun (Isa. xlv. 22), as a debt is crossed and blotted out when it is remitted. It intimates that when God forgives sin he remembers it no more against the sinner; it is forgotten, as that which is blotted out; all the bitter things written against the sinner (Job xiii. 26) are wiped out as it were with a sponge; it is the cancelling of a bond,

the vacating of a judgment. [2.] That we cannot expect our sins should be pardoned unless we repent of them, and turn from them to God. Though Christ has died to purchase the remission of sin, yet, that we may have the benefit of that purchase in the forgiveness of our sins, we must repent, and be converted: if no repentance, no remission. [3.] Hopes of the pardon of sin upon repentance should be a powerful inducement to us to repent. *Repent, that your sins may be blotted out*: and that repentance is evangelical which flows from an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and the hopes of pardon. This was the first and great argument, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* [4.] The most comfortable fruit of the forgiveness of our sins will be *when the times of refreshing shall come*; if our sins be forgiven us, we have now reason to be of good cheer; but the comfort will be complete when the pardon shall be allowed in open court, and our justification published *before angels and men*—when *whom he has justified, them he glorifies*, Rom. viii. 30. As now we are the sons of God (1 John iii. 2), so now we have our sins blotted out; *but it doth not yet appear what are the blessed fruits of it, till the times of refreshing shall come.* During these times of toil and conflict (doubts and fears within, troubles and dangers without) we cannot have that full satisfaction of our pardon, and in it, that we shall have when the refreshing times come, which shall wipe away all tears.

(2.) That they should have the comfort of Christ's coming (v. 20, 21): "*He shall send Jesus Christ*, the same Jesus, the very same *that before was preached unto you*; for you must not expect another dispensation, another gospel, but the continuance and completion of this; you must not expect another prophet like unto Jesus, as Moses bade you expect another like unto him; for, though *the heavens must receive him till the times of the restitution of all things*; yet, if you *repent and be converted*, you shall find no want of him; some way or other he shall be seen of you." [1.] We must not expect Christ's personal presence with us in this world; for the heavens, which received him out of the sight of the disciples, must retain him till the end of time. To that seat of the blessed his bodily presence is confined, and will be to the end of time, the accomplishment of all things (so it may be read); and therefore those dishonour him, and deceive themselves, who dream of his corporal presence in the eucharist. It is agreeable to a state of trial and probation that the glorified Redeemer should be out of sight, because we must live by that faith in him which is *the evidence of things not seen*; because he must be *believed on in the world*, he must be *received up into glory.* Dr. Hammond reads it, *Who must receive the heavens*, that is, who must receive the glory and power of the upper

world; he must reign till all be made subject to him, 1 Cor. xv. 25; Ps. lxxv. 2. [2.] Yet it is promised that he shall be sent to all that repent and are converted (v. 20): "*He shall send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you by his disciples, both before and since his resurrection, and is, and will be, all in all to them.*" First, "You shall have his spiritual presence. He that is sent into the world shall be sent to you; you shall have the comfort of his being sent; he shall be sent among you in his gospel, which shall be his tabernacle, his chariot of war." Secondly, "*He shall send Jesus Christ to destroy Jerusalem, and the nation of unbelieving Jews, that are enemies to Christ and Christianity, and to deliver his ministers and people from them, and give them peace in the profession of the gospel, and that shall be a time of refreshing, in which you shall share.*" Then had the churches rest; so Dr. Hammond. Thirdly, "The sending of Christ to judge the world, at the end of time, will be a blessing to you; you shall then *lift up your heads with joy, knowing that your redemption draws nigh.*" It seems to refer to this, for till then the heavens must receive him, v. 21. As God's counsels from eternity, so his predictions from the beginning of time, had a reference to the transactions of the last day, when the mystery of God shall be finished, as he had declared to his servants the prophets, Rev. x. 7. The institution of all things in the church had an eye to the restitution of all things at the end of time.

4. He tells them what ground they had to expect these things, if they were converted to Christ. Though they had denied him, and put him to death, yet they might hope to find favour through him, upon the account of their being Israelites. For,

(1.) As Israelites, they had the monopoly of the grace of the Old Testament; they were, above any other, God's favourite nation, and the favours God bestowed upon them were such as had a reference to the Messiah, and his kingdom: *You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant.* A double privilege. [1.] They were the children, that is, the disciples, of the prophets, as children at school; not sons of the prophets, in the sense that we read of such in the Old Testament, from Samuel and downward, who were, or are, trained up to be endued with the spirit of prophecy; but you are of that people from among whom prophets were raised up, and to whom prophets were sent. It is spoken of as a great favour to Israel that God raised up of their sons for prophets, Amos ii. 11. All the inspired writers, both of the Old and New Testament, were of the seed of Abraham; and it was their honour and advantage that unto them were committed the oracles of God, Rom. iii. 2. Their government was constituted by prophecy, that is, by divine revelation; and by it their affairs were for many

ages very much managed. See Hos. xii. 13. *By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.* Those of the latter ages of the church, when prophecy had ceased, might yet be fitly called the children of the prophets, because they heard, though they did not know, the voices of the prophets, which were read in their synagogues every sabbath day, ch. xiii. 27. Now this should quicken them to embrace Christ, and they might hope to be accepted of him; for their own prophets had foretold that this grace should be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. i. 13), and therefore ought not to be neglected by them, nor should be denied to them. Those that are blessed with prophets and prophecy (as all are that have the scriptures) are concerned not to receive the grace of God therein in vain. We may apply it particularly to ministers' children, who, if they plead their parentage effectually with themselves, as an inducement to be faithful and forward in religion, may comfortably plead it with God, and hope that the children of God's servants shall continue. [2.] They were the children, that is, the heirs, of the covenant which God made with our Fathers, as children in the family. God's covenant was made with Abraham and his seed, and they were that seed with whom the covenant was made, and on whom the blessings of the covenant were entailed: "The promise of the Messiah was made to you, and therefore if you forsake not your own mercies, and do not by an obstinate infidelity put a bar in your own door, you may hope it shall be made good to you." That promise here mentioned, as the principal article of the covenant, *In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed*, though referring principally to Christ (Gal. iii. 16), yet may include the church also, which is his body, all believers, that are the spiritual seed of Abraham. All the kindreds of the earth were blessed in having a church for Christ among them; and those that were the seed of Abraham according to the flesh stood fairest for this privilege. If all the kindreds of the earth were to be blessed in Christ, much more that kindred, his kinsmen according to the flesh.

(2.) As Israelites, they had the first offer of the grace of the New Testament. Because they were the children of the prophets and the covenant, therefore to them the Redeemer was first sent, which was an encouragement to them to hope that if they did repent, and were converted, he should be yet further sent for their comfort (v. 20): *He shall send Jesus Christ, for to you first he hath sent him, v. 26. Unto you first, you Jews, though not to you only, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, appointed and authorized him to be a prince and a Saviour, and, in confirmation of this, raised him from the dead, sent him to bless you, to make a tender of his blessing to you, especially that*



great blessing of turning every one of you from his iniquities; and therefore it concerns you to receive this blessing, and turn from your iniquities, and you may be encouraged to hope that you shall. [1.] We are here told whence Christ had his mission: *God raised up his Son Jesus, and sent him.* God raised him up when he constituted him a prophet, owned him by a voice from heaven, and filled him with his Spirit without measure, and then sent him; for to this end he raised him up, that he might be his commissioner to treat of peace. He sent him to bear witness of the truth, sent him to seek and save lost souls, sent him against his enemies, to conquer them. Some refer the raising of him up to the resurrection, which was the first step towards his exaltation; this was, as it were, the renewing of his commission; and though, having raised him up, he seemed presently to take him from us, yet he did really send him afresh to us in his gospel and Spirit. [2.] To whom he was sent: "*Unto you first.*" You of the seed of Abraham, you that are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, to you is the tender made of gospel grace." The personal ministry of Christ, as that of the prophets, was confined to the Jews; he was not then sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and he forbade the disciples he then sent forth to go any further. After his resurrection, he was to be preached indeed to all nations, but they must begin at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. And, when they went to other nations, they first preached to the Jews they found therein. They were the first-born, and, as such, had the privilege of the first offer. So far were they from being excluded for their putting Christ to death, that, when he is risen, he is first sent to them, and they are primarily intended to have benefit by his death. [3.] On what errand he was sent: "*He is sent to you first, to bless you;*" this is his primary errand, not to condemn you, as you deserve, but to justify you, if you will accept of the justification offered you, in the way wherein it is offered; but he that sends him first to bless you, if you refuse and reject that blessing, will send him to curse you with a curse," Mal. iv. 6. Note, First, Christ's errand into the world was to bless us, to bring a blessing with him, for the *Sun of righteousness rose with healing under his wings*; and, when he left the world, he left a blessing behind him, for he was parted from the disciples as he blessed them, Luke xxiv. 51. He sent his Spirit to be the great blessing, the blessing of blessings, Isa. xlv. 3. It is by Christ that God sends blessings to us, and through him only we can expect to receive them. Secondly, The great blessing wherewith Christ came to bless us was the turning of us away from our iniquities, the saving of us from our sins (Matt. i. 21), to turn us from sin, that we may be qualified to receive all other blessings. Sin is that to

which naturally we cleave; the design of divine grace is to turn us from it, nay, to turn us against it, that we may not only forsake it, but hate it. The gospel has a direct tendency to do this, not only as it requires us, every one of us, to turn from our iniquities, but as it promises us grace to enable us to do so. "Therefore, do your part; repent, and be converted, because Christ is ready to do his, in turning you from your iniquities, and so blessing you."

## CHAP. IV.

In going over the last two chapters, where we met with so many good things that the apostles did, I wondered what was become of the scribes and Pharisees, and chief priests, that they did not appear to contradict and oppose them, as they had used to treat Christ himself; surely they were so confounded at first with the pouring out of the Spirit that they were for a time struck dumb! But I find we have not lost them; their forces rally again, and here we have an encounter between them and the apostles; for from the beginning the gospel met with opposition. Here, I. Peter and John are taken up, upon a warrant from the priests, and committed to jail, ver. 1-4. II. They are examined by a committee of the great sanhedrim, ver. 5-7. III. They bravely avow what they have done, and preach Christ to their persecutors, ver. 8-12. IV. Their persecutors, being unable to answer them, exhort them silence, threatening them if they go on to preach the gospel, and so dismiss them, ver. 13-22. V. They apply to God by prayer, for the further operations of that grace which they had already experienced, ver. 23-30. VI. God owns them, both outwardly and inwardly, by manifest tokens of his presence with them, ver. 31-33. VII. The believers had their hearts knit together in holy love, and enlarged their charity to the poor, and the church flourished more than ever, to the glory of Christ, ver. 33-37.

AND as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. 4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

We have here the interests of the kingdom of heaven successfully carried on, and the powers of darkness appearing against them to put a stop to them. Let Christ's servants be ever so resolute, Satan's agents will be spiteful; and therefore, let Satan's agents be ever so spiteful, Christ's servants ought to be resolute.

I. The apostles, Peter and John, went on in their work, and did not labour in vain. The Spirit enabled the ministers to do their part, and the people theirs.

1. The preachers faithfully deliver the doctrine of Christ: *They spoke unto the people*, to all that were within hearing, v. 1. What they said concerned them all, and they spoke it openly and publicly. *They taught the people*, still taught the people knowledge; taught those that as yet did not believe, for their conviction and conversion; and taught those that did believe, for their comfort and establishment. *They preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.* The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, (1.) Was verified in Jesus; this they proved, that



Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, as the first, the chief, that should rise from the dead, *ch. xxvi. 23.* They preached the resurrection of Christ as their warrant for what they did. Or, (2.) It is secured by him to all believers. The resurrection of the dead includes all the happiness of the future state. *This they preached through Jesus Christ,* attainable through him (*Phil. iii. 10, 11*), and through him only. They meddled not with matters of state, but kept to their business, and preached to the people heaven as their end and Christ as their way. See *ch. xvii. 18.*

2. The hearers cheerfully receive it (*v. 4*): *Many of those who heard the word believed;* not all—perhaps not the most, yet many, *to the number of about five thousand,* over and above the three thousand we read of before. See how the gospel got ground, and it was the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit. Though the preachers were persecuted, the word prevailed; for sometimes the church's suffering days have been her growing days: the days of her infancy were so.

II. The chief priests and their party now made head against them, and did what they could to crush them; their hands were tied awhile, but their hearts were not in the least changed. Now here observe, 1. Who they were that appeared against the apostles. They were the *priests*; you may be sure, in the first place, they were always sworn enemies to Christ and his gospel; they were as jealous for their priesthood as Cæsar for his monarchy, and would not bear one they thought their rival now, when he was preached as a priest, as much as when he himself preached as a prophet. With them was joined the *captain of the temple*, who, it is supposed, was a Roman officer, governor of the garrison placed in the tower of Antonia, for the guard of the temple: so that still here were both Jews and Gentiles confederate against Christ. *The Sadducees* also, who denied the *being of spirits and the future state*, were zealous against them. "One would wonder" (saith Mr. Baxter) "what should make such brutists as the Sadducees were to be such furious silencers and persecutors. If there is no life to come, what harm can other men's hopes of it do them? But in depraved souls all faculties are vitiated. A blind man has a malignant heart and a cruel hand, to this day." 2. How they stood affected to the apostles' preaching: *They were grieved that they taught the people, v. 2.* It grieved them, both that the gospel doctrine was preached (was so preached, so publicly, so boldly), and that the people were so ready to hear it. They thought, when they had put Christ to such an ignominious death, his disciples would ever after be ashamed and afraid to own him, and the people would have invincible prejudices against his doctrine; and now it vexed them to see themselves disappointed, and that his gospel got ground, in-

stead of losing it. *The wicked shall see it, and be grieved,* Ps. cxii. 10. They were grieved at that which they should have rejoiced in, at that which angels rejoice in. Miserable is their case to whom the glory of Christ's kingdom is a grief; for, since the glory of that kingdom is everlasting, it follows of course that their grief will be everlasting too. It grieved them that the apostles *preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.* The Sadducees were grieved that the resurrection from the dead was preached; for they opposed that doctrine, and could not bear to hear of a future state, to hear it so well attested. The chief priests were grieved that they preached the resurrection of the dead through Jesus, that he should have the honour of it; and, though they professed to believe the resurrection of the dead against the Sadducees, yet they would rather give up that important article than have it preached and proved to be through Jesus. 3. How far they proceeded against the apostles (*v. 3*): *They laid hands on them* (that is, their servants and officers did at their command), and *put them in hold,* committed them to the custody of the proper officer until the next day; they could not examine them now, for it was even-tide, and yet would defer it no longer than *till next day.* See how God trains up his servants for sufferings by degrees, and by less trials prepares them for greater; now they resist unto bonds only, but afterwards to blood.

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, 6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; 10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men,



whereby we must be saved. 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. 14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

We have here the trial of Peter and John before the judges of the ecclesiastical court, for preaching a sermon concerning Jesus Christ, and working a miracle in his name. This is charged upon them as a crime, which was the best service they could do to God or men.

I. Here is the court set. An extraordinary court, it should seem, was called on purpose upon this occasion. Observe, 1. The time when the court sat (v. 5)—*on the morrow*; not in the night, as when Christ was to be tried before them, for they seem not to have been so hot upon this prosecution as they were upon that; it was well if they began to relent. But they adjourned it to the morrow, and no longer; for they were impatient to get them silenced, and would lose no time. 2. The place where—in Jerusalem (v. 6); there it was that he told his disciples they must expect to suffer hard things, as he had done before them in that place. This seems to come in here as an aggravation of their sin, that in Jerusalem, where there were so many that looked for redemption before it came, yet there were more that would not look upon it when it did come. How is that faithful city become a harlot! See Matt. xxiii. 37. It was in the foresight of Jerusalem's standing in her own light that Christ beheld the city, and wept over it. 3. The judges of the court. (1.) Their general character: they were *rulers, elders, and scribes*, v. 5. The scribes were men of learning, who came to dispute with the apostles, and hoped to confute them. The rulers and elders were men in power, who, if they could not answer them, thought they could find some cause or other to silence them. If the gospel of Christ had not been of God, it could not have made its way, for it had both the learning and power of the world against it, both the colleges of the scribes and the courts of the elders. (2.) The names of some of them, who were most considerable. Here were Annas and Caiaphas, ringleaders in this persecution; Annas the president of the sanhedrim, and Caiaphas the high priest (though Annas is here called so) and *father of the house of judgment*. It should seem that Annas and Caiaphas executed the high priest's office alternately, year for year. These two were most active against Christ; then Caiaphas was high priest, now Annas was; however they were both equally malignant against Christ.

and his gospel. John is supposed to be the son of Annas; and Alexander is mentioned by Josephus as a man that made a figure at that time. There were others likewise that were of the kindred of the high priest, who having dependence on him, and expectations from him, would be sure to say as he said, and vote with him against the apostles. Great relations, and not good, have been a snare to many.

II. The prisoners are arraigned, v. 7. 1. They are brought to the bar; they set them *in the midst*, for the sanhedrim sat in a circle, and those who had any thing to do in the court stood or sat in the midst of them (Luke ii. 46), so Dr. Lightfoot. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, *The assembly of the wicked has enclosed me*, Ps. xxii. 16. *They compassed me about like bees*, Ps. cxviii. 12. They were seated on every side. 2. The question they asked them was, "*By what power, or by what name, have you done this? By what authority do you these things?*" (the same question that they had asked their Master, Matt. xxi. 23): "Who commissioned you to preach such a doctrine as this, and empowered you to work such a miracle as this? You have no warrant nor license from us, and therefore are accountable to us whence you have your warrant." Some think this question was grounded upon a fond conceit that the very naming of some names might do wonders, as *ch. xix.* 13. The Jewish exorcists made use of the name of Jesus. Now they would know what name they made use of in their cure, and consequently what name they set themselves to advance in their preaching. They knew very well that they preached Jesus, and the resurrection of the dead, and the healing of the sick, through Jesus (v. 2), yet they asked them, to tease them, and try if they could get any thing out of them that looked criminal.

III. The plea they put in, the design of which was not so much to clear and secure themselves as to advance the name and honour of their Master, who had told them that their being brought before governors and kings would give them an opportunity of preaching the gospel to those to whom otherwise they could not have had access, and it should be a *testimony against them* Mark xiii. 19. Observe,

1. By whom this plea was drawn up: it was dictated by the Holy Ghost, who fitted Peter more than before for this occasion. The apostles, with a holy negligence of their own preservation, set themselves to preach Christ as he had directed them to do in such a case, and then Christ made good to them his promise, that the Holy Ghost should give them *in that same hour what they should speak*. Christ's faithful advocates shall never want instructions, Mark xiii. 11.

2. To whom it was given in. Peter, who is still the chief speaker, addresses himself to



the judges of the court, as the *rulers of the people, and elders of Israel*; for the wickedness of those in power does not divest them of their power, but the consideration of the power they are entrusted with should prevail to divest them of their wickedness. "You are rulers and elders, and should know more than others of the signs of the times, and not oppose that which you are bound by the duty of your place to embrace and advance, that is, the kingdom of the Messiah; you are rulers and elders of Israel, God's people, and if you mislead them, and cause them to err, you will have a great deal to answer for."

3. What the plea is: it is a solemn declaration,

(1.) That what they did was in the name of Jesus Christ, which was a direct answer to the question the court asked them (*v. 9, 10*): "*If we this day be examined*, be called to an account as criminals, so the word signifies, *for a good deed* (as any one will own it to be) *done to the impotent man*,—if this be the ground of the commitment, this the matter of the indictment,—if we are put to the question, *by what means*, or by whom, *he is made whole*, we have an answer ready, and it is the same we gave to the people (*ch. iii. 16*), we will repeat it to you, as that which we will stand by. *Be it known to you all* who pretend to be ignorant of this matter, and not to you only, but *to all the people of Israel*, for they are all concerned to know it, *that by the name of Jesus Christ*, that precious, powerful, prevailing name, that name above every name, even by him whom you in contempt called Jesus of Nazareth, *whom you crucified*, both rulers and people, and *whom God hath raised from the dead* and advanced to the highest dignity and dominion, *even by him doth this man stand here before you whole*, a monument of the power of the Lord Jesus." Here, [1.] He justifies what he and his colleague had done in curing the lame man. It was a *good deed*; it was a kindness to the man that had begged, but could not work for his living; a kindness to the temple, and to those that went in to worship, who were now freed from the noise and clamour of this common beggar. "Now, if we be reckoned with for this good deed, we have no reason to be ashamed, 1 Pet. ii. 20; *ch. iv. 14, 16*. Let those be ashamed who bring us into trouble for it." Note, It is no new thing for good men to suffer ill for doing well. *Bene agere et male pati vere Christianum est—To do well and to suffer punishment is the Christian's lot*. [2.] He transfers all the praise and glory of this good deed to Jesus Christ. "It is by him, and not by any power of ours, that this man is cured." The apostles seek not to raise an interest for themselves, nor to recommend themselves by this miracle to the good opinion of the court; but, "Let the Lord alone be exalted, no matter what becomes of us." [3.] He charges it upon the judges themselves, that they had been the murderers of

this Jesus: "It is he *whom you crucified*, look how you will answer it;" in order to the bringing of them to believe in Christ (for he aims at no less than this) he endeavours to convince them of sin, of that sin which, one would think, of all others, was most likely to startle conscience—their putting Christ to death. Let them take it how they will, Peter will miss no occasion to tell them of it. [4.] He attests the resurrection of Christ as the strongest testimony for him, and against his persecutors: "*They crucified him*, but *God raised him from the dead*; they took away his life, but God gave it to him again, and your further opposition to his interest will speed no better." He tells them that God raised him from the dead, and they could not for shame answer him with that foolish suggestion which they palmed upon the people, that *his disciples came by night and stole him away*. [5.] He preaches this to all the bystanders, to be by them repeated to all their neighbours, and commands all manner of persons, from the highest to the lowest, to take notice of it at their peril: "*Be it known to you all* that are here present, and it shall be made known to *all the people of Israel*, wherever they are dispersed, in spite of all your endeavours to stifle and suppress the notice of it: as the Lord God of gods knows, so Israel shall know, all Israel shall know, that wonders are wrought in the name of Jesus, not by repeating it as a charm, but believing in it as a divine revelation of grace and good-will to men.

(2.) That the name of this Jesus, by the authority of which they acted, is that name alone by which we can be saved. He passes from this particular instance to show that it is not a particular sect or party that is designed to be set up by the doctrine they preached, and the miracle they wrought, which people might either join with or keep off from at their pleasure, as it was with the sects of the philosophers and those among the Jews; but that it is a sacred and divine institution that is hereby ratified and confirmed, and which all people are highly concerned to submit to and come into the measures of. It is not an indifferent thing, but of absolute necessity, that people believe in this name, and call upon it. [1.] We are obliged to it in duty to God, and in compliance with his designs (*v. 11*): "*This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders*, you that are the *rulers of the people, and the elders of Israel*, that should be the builders of the church, that pretend to be so, for the church is God's building. Here was a stone offered you, to be put in the chief place of the building, to be the main pillar on which the fabric might entirely rest; but you set it at nought, rejected it, would not make use of it, but threw it by as good for nothing but to make a stepping-stone of; but this stone is *now become the head of the corner*; God has raised up this Jesus whom you rejected, and, by setting



him at his right hand, has made him both the corner stone and the head stone, the centre of unity and the fountain of power." Probably St. Peter here chose to make use of this quotation because Christ had himself made use of it, in answer to the demand of the chief priests and the elders concerning his authority, not long before this, Matt. xxi. 42. Scripture is a tried weapon in our spiritual conflicts: let us therefore stick to it. [2.] We are obliged to it for our own interest. We are undone if we do not take shelter in this name, and make it our refuge and strong tower; for we cannot be saved out by Jesus Christ, and, if we be not eternally saved, we are eternally undone (v. 12): *Neither is there salvation in any other.* As there is no other name by which diseased bodies can be cured, so there is no other by which sinful souls can be saved. "By him, and him only, by receiving and embracing his doctrine, salvation must now be hoped for by all. For there is no other religion in the world, no, not that delivered by Moses, by which salvation can be had for those that do not now come into this, at the preaching of it." So Dr. Hammond. Observe here, *First*, Our salvation is our chief concern, and that which ought to lie nearest to our hearts—our rescue from wrath and the curse, and our restoration to God's favour and blessing. *Secondly*, Our salvation is not in ourselves, nor can be obtained by any merit or strength of our own; we can destroy ourselves, but we cannot save ourselves. *Thirdly*, There are among men many names that pretend to be saving names, but really are not so; many institutions in religion that pretend to settle a reconciliation and correspondence between God and man, but cannot do it. *Fourthly*, It is only by Christ and his name that those favours can be expected from God which are necessary to our salvation, and that our services can be accepted with God. This is the honour of Christ's name, that it is the only name whereby we must be saved, the only name we have to plead in all our addresses to God. This name is *given*. God has appointed it, and it is an inestimable benefit freely conferred upon us. It is given *under heaven*. Christ has not only a great name in heaven, but a great name under heaven; for he has all power both in the upper and in the lower world. It is given *among men*, who need salvation, men who are ready to perish. We may be saved by his name, that name of his, *The Lord our righteousness*; and we cannot be saved by any other. How far those may find favour with God who have not the knowledge of Christ, nor any actual faith in him, yet live up to the light they have, it is not our business to determine. But this we know, that whatever saving favour such may receive it is upon the account of Christ, and for his sake only; so that still *there is no salvation in any other.* *I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me*, Isa. xlv. 4.

IV. The stand that the court was put to in the prosecution, by this plea, v. 13, 14. Now was fulfilled that promise Christ made, that he would give them a mouth and wisdom, *such as all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay nor resist.*

1. They could not deny the cure of the lame man to be both a good deed and a miracle. He was there standing with Peter and John, ready to attest the cure, if there were occasion, and they had *nothing to say against it* (v. 14), either to disprove it or to disparage it. It was well that it was not the sabbath day, else they would have had that to say against it.

2. They could not, with all their pomp and power, face down Peter and John. This was a miracle not inferior to the cure of the lame man, considering both what cruel bloody enemies these priests had been to the name of Christ (enough to make any one tremble that appeared for him), and considering what cowardly faint-hearted advocates those disciples had lately been for him, Peter particularly, who denied him for fear of a silly maid; yet now they see the *boldness of Peter and John*, v. 13. Probably there was something extraordinary and very surprising in their looks; they appeared not only undaunted by the rulers, but daring and daunting to them; they had something majestic in their foreheads, sparkling in their eyes, and commanding, if not terrifying, in their voice. They *set their faces like a flint*, as the prophet, Isa. l. 7; Ezek. iii. 9. The courage of Christ's faithful confessors has often been the confusion of their cruel persecutors. Now, (1.) We are here told what increased their wonder: *They perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men.* They enquired either of the apostles or themselves or of others, and found that they were of mean extraction, born in Galilee, that they were bred fishermen, and had no learned education, had never been at any university, were not brought up at the feet of any of the rabbins, had never been conversant in courts, camps, or colleges; nay, perhaps, talk to them at this time upon any point in natural philosophy, mathematics, or politics, and you will find they know nothing of the matter; and yet speak to them of the Messiah and his kingdom, and they speak with so much clearness, evidence, and assurance, so pertinently and so fluently, and are so ready in the scriptures of the Old Testament relating to it, that the most learned judge upon the bench is not able to answer them, nor to enter the lists with them. They were *ignorant men*—*idōtai*, *private men*, men that had not any public character nor employment; and therefore they wondered they should have such high pretensions. They were *idiots* (so the word signifies): they looked upon them with as much contempt as if they had been *mere naturals*, and expected no more from them, which made them wonder to see what freedom they took. (2.) We are told what

made their wonder in a great measure to cease: they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus; they, themselves, it is probable, had seen them with him in the temple, and now recollected that they had seen them; or some of their servants or those about them informed them of it, for they would not be thought themselves to have taken notice of such inferior people. But when they understood that they had been with Jesus, had been conversant with him, attendant on him, and trained up under him, they knew what to impute their boldness to; nay, their boldness in divine things was enough to show with whom they had had their education. Note, Those that have been with Jesus, in converse and communion with him, have been attending on his word, praying in his name, and celebrating the memorials of his death and resurrection, should conduct themselves, in every thing, so that those who converse with them may take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus; and this makes them so holy, and heavenly, and spiritual, and cheerful; this has raised them so much above this world, and filled them with another. One may know that they have been in the mount by the shining of their faces.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. 17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. 18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. 22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

We have here the issue of the trial of Peter and John before the council. They came off now with flying colours, because they

must be trained up to sufferings by degrees, and by less trials be prepared for greater. They now but run with the footmen; hereafter we shall have them contending with horses, Jer. xii. 5.

I. Here is the consultation and resolution of the court about this matter, and their proceeding thereupon.

1. The prisoners were ordered to withdraw (v. 15): They commanded them to go aside out of the council, willing enough to get clear of them (they spoke so home to their consciences), and not willing they should hear the acknowledgments that were extorted from them; but, though they might not hear them, we have them here upon record. The designs of Christ's enemies are carried on in close cabals, and they dig deep, as if they would hide their counsels from the Lord.

2. A debate arose upon this matter: They conferred among themselves; every one is desired to speak his mind freely, and to give advice upon this important affair. Now the scripture was fulfilled that the rulers would take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, Ps. ii. 2. The question proposed was, What shall we do to these men? v. 16. If they would have yielded to the convincing commanding power of truth, it had been easy to say what they should do to these men. They should have placed them at the head of their council, and received their doctrine, and been baptized by them in the name of the Lord Jesus, and joined in fellowship with them. But, when men will not be persuaded to do what they should do, it is no marvel that they are ever and anon at a loss what to do. The truths of Christ, if men would but entertain them as they should, would give them no manner of trouble or uneasiness; but, if they hold them or imprison them in unrighteousness (Rom. i. 18), they will find them a burdensome stone that they will not know what to do with, Zech. xii. 3.

3. They came at last to a resolution, in two things:—

(1.) That it was not safe to punish the apostles for what they had done. Very willingly would they have done it, but they had not courage to do it, because the people espoused their cause, and cried up the miracle; and they stood now in as much awe of them as they had done formerly, when they durst not lay hands on Christ for fear of the people. By this it appears that the outcry of the mob against our Saviour was a forced or managed thing, the stream soon returned to its former channel. Now they could not find how they might punish Peter and John, what colour they might have for it, because of the people. They knew it would be an unrighteous thing to punish them, and therefore should have been restrained from it by the fear of God; but they considered it only as a dangerous thing, and therefore were held in from it only by the fear of the people. For, [1.] The people were convinced of the



truth of the miracle; it was a notable miracle, *γνωστόν σημεῖον*—a known miracle; it was known that they did it in Christ's name, and that Christ himself had often done the like before. This was a known instance of the power of Christ, and a proof of his doctrine. That it was a great miracle, and wrought for the confirmation of the doctrine they preached (for it was a sign), was manifest to all that dwelt in Jerusalem: it was an opinion universally received, and, the miracle being wrought at the gate of the temple, universal notice was taken of it; and they themselves, with all the craftiness and all the effrontery they had, could not deny it to be a true miracle; every body would have hooted at them if they had. They could easily deny it to their own consciences, but not to the world. The proofs of the gospel were undeniable. [2.] They went further, and were not only convinced of the truth of the miracle, but all men glorified God for that which was done. Even those that were not persuaded by it to believe in Christ were yet so affected with it, as a mercy to a poor man and an honour to their country, that they could not but give praise to God for it; even natural religion taught them to do this. And, if the priests had punished Peter and John for that for which all men glorified God, they would have lost all their interest in the people, and been abandoned as enemies both to God and man. Thus therefore their wrath shall be made to praise God, and the remainder thereof shall be restrained.

(2.) That it was nevertheless necessary to silence them for the future, v. 17, 18. They could not prove that they had said or done any thing amiss, and yet they must no more say nor do what they have done. All their care is that the doctrine of Christ spread no further among the people; as if that healing institution were a plague begun, the contagion of which must be stopped. See how the malice of hell fights against the counsels of heaven; God will have the knowledge of Christ to spread all the world over, but the chief priests would have it spread no further, which he that sits in heaven laughs at. Now, to prevent the further spreading of this doctrine, [1.] They charge the apostles never to preach it any more. Be it enacted by their authority (which they think every Israelite is bound in conscience to submit to) that no man speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus, v. 18. We do not find that they give them any reason why the doctrine of Christ must be suppressed; they cannot say it is false or dangerous, or of any ill tendency, and they are ashamed to own the true reason, that it testifies against their hypocrisy and wickedness, and shocks their tyranny. But, *Stat pro ratione voluntas*—They can assign no reason but their will. "We strictly charge and command you, not only that you do not preach this doctrine publicly, but that you speak henceforth to no man, not to any particular person privately,

in this name," v. 17. There is not a greater service done to the devil's kingdom than the silencing of faithful ministers, and putting those under a bushel that are the lights of the world. [2.] They threaten them if they do, strictly threaten them: it is at their peril. This court will reckon itself highly affronted if they do, and they shall fall under its displeasure. Christ had not only charged them to preach the gospel to every creature, but had promised to bear them out in it, and reward them for it. Now these priests not only forbid the preaching of the gospel, but threaten to punish it as a heinous crime; but those who know how to put a just value upon Christ's promises know how to put a just contempt upon the world's threatenings, though they be threatenings of slaughter that it breathes out, ch. ix. 1.

II. Here is the courageous resolution of the prisoners to go on in their work, notwithstanding the resolutions of this court, and their declaration of this resolution, v. 19, 20. Peter and John needed not confer together, to know one another's minds (for they were both actuated by one and the same Spirit), but agree presently in the same sentiments, and jointly put in the answer: "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to whom both you and we are accountable, to hearken unto you more than unto God, we appeal to yourselves, judge you; for we cannot forbear speaking to every body the things which we have seen and heard, and are ourselves full of, and are charged to publish." The prudence of the serpent would have directed them to be silent, and, though they could not with a good conscience promise that they would not preach the gospel any more, yet they needed not tell the rulers that they would. But the boldness of the lion directed them thus to set both the authority and the malignity of their persecutors at defiance. They do, in effect, tell them that they are resolved to go on in preaching, and justify themselves in it with two things:—1. The command of God: "You charge us not to preach the gospel; he has charged us to preach it, has committed it to us as a trust, requiring us upon our allegiance faithfully to dispense it; now whom must we obey, God or you?" Here they appeal to one of the *communes notitie*—to a settled and acknowledged maxim in the law of nature, that if men's commands and God's interfere God's commands must take place. It is a rule in the common law of England that if any statute be made contrary to the law of God it is null and void. Nothing can be more absurd than to hearken unto weak and fallible men, that are fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects, more than unto a God that is infinitely wise and holy, our Creator and sovereign Lord, and the Judge to whom we are all accountable. The case is so plain, so uncontroverted and self-evident, that we will venture to leave it to yourselves to judge of it, though you are biassed and

prejudiced. Can you think it *right in the sight of God* to break a divine command in obedience to a human injunction? That is right indeed which is *right in the sight of God*; for his judgment, we are sure, is according to truth, and therefore by that we ought to govern ourselves. 2. The convictions of their consciences. Even if they had not had such an express command from heaven to preach the doctrine of Christ, yet they *could not but speak*, and speak publicly, *those things which they had seen and heard*. Like Elihu, they were *full of this matter*, and the Spirit within them constrained them, they must speak, that they might be refreshed, Job xxxii. 18, 20. (1.) They felt the influence of it upon themselves, what a blessed change it had wrought upon them, had brought them into a new world, and therefore they could not but speak of it: and those speak the doctrine of Christ best that have felt the power of it, and tasted the sweetness of it, and have themselves been deeply affected with it; it is as a *fire in their bones*, Jer. xx. 9. (2.) They knew the importance of it to others. They look with concern upon perishing souls, and know that they cannot escape eternal ruin but by Jesus Christ, and therefore will be faithful to them in giving them warning, and showing them the right way. They are things *which we have seen and heard*, and therefore are fully assured of ourselves: and things which we only have seen and heard, and therefore, if we do not publish them, who will? Who can? *Knowing the favour*, as well as the *terror of the Lord*, we persuade men; *for the love of Christ* and the love of souls constrain us, 2 Cor. v. 11, 14.

III. Here is the discharge of the prisoners (v. 21): *They further threatened them*, and thought they frightened them and then *let them go*. There were many whom they terrified into an obedience to their unrighteous decrees; they knew how to keep men in awe with their excommunication (John ix. 22), and thought they could have the same influence upon the apostles that they had upon other men; but they were deceived, for they had been with Jesus. They threatened them, and that was all they did now: when they had done this they *let them go*, 1. Because they durst not contradict the people, who glorified God for that which was done, and would have been ready (at least they thought so) to pull them out of their seats, if they had punished the apostles for doing it. As rulers by the ordinance of God are made a terror and restraint to wicked people, so people are sometimes by the providence of God made a terror and restraint to wicked rulers. 2. Because they could not contradict the miracle: *For (v. 22) the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was shown*. And therefore, (1.) The miracle was so much the greater, he having been lame from his mother's womb, ch. iii. 2. The older he grew the more inveterate the disease was, and the

more hardly cured. If those that are grown into years, and have been long accustomed to evil, are cured of their spiritual impotency to good, and thereby of their evil customs, the power of divine grace is therein so much the more magnified. (2.) The truth of it was so much the better attested; for *the man being above forty years old*, he was able, like the blind man whom Christ healed, when he was asked, to *speak for himself*, John ix. 21.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. 24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: 25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. 29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. 31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

We hear no more at present of the chief priests, what they did when they had dismissed Peter and John, but are to attend those *two witnesses*. And here we have,

I. Their return to their brethren, the apostles and ministers, and perhaps some private Christians (v. 23): *Being let go, they went to their own company*, who perhaps at this time were met together in pain for them, and praying for them; as ch. xii. 12. As soon as ever they were at liberty, they went to their old friends, and returned to their church-fellowship. 1. Though God had highly honoured them, in calling them out to be his wit-



nesses, and enabling them to acquit themselves so well, yet they were not puffed up with the honour done them, nor thought themselves thereby exalted above their brethren, but *went to their own company*. No advancement in gifts or usefulness should make us think ourselves above either the duties or the privileges of the communion of saints. 2. Though their enemies had severely threatened them, and endeavoured to break their knot, and frighten them from the work they were jointly engaged in, yet they *went to their own company*, and feared not the wrath of their rulers. They might have had comfort, if, being let go, they had retired to their closets, and spent some time in devotion there. But they were men in a public station, and must seek not so much their own personal satisfaction as the public good. Christ's followers do best in company, provided it be in their own company.

II. The account they gave them of what had passed: They *reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them*, adding, no doubt, what they were enabled by the grace of God to reply to them, and how their trial issued. They related it to them, 1. That they might know what to expect both from men and from God in the progress of their work. From men they might expect every thing that was terrifying, but from God every thing that was encouraging; men would do their utmost to run them down, but God would take effectual care to bear them up. Thus the brethren in the Lord would wax confident through their bonds, and their experiences, as Phil. i. 14. 2. That they might have it recorded in the history of the church, for the benefit of posterity, particularly for the confirmation of our faith touching the resurrection of Christ. The silence of an adversary, in some cases, is next door to the consent and testimony of an adversary. These apostles told the chief priests to their faces that God had *raised up Jesus from the dead*, and, though they were a body of them together, they had not the confidence to deny it, but, in the silliest and most sneaking manner imaginable, bade the apostles not to tell any body of it. 3. That they might now join with them in prayers and praises; and by such a concert as this God would be the more glorified, and the church the more edified. We should therefore communicate to our brethren the providences of God that relate to us, and our experience of his presence with us, that they may assist us in our acknowledgment of God therein.

III. Their address to God upon this occasion: *When they heard of the impotent malice of the priests, and the potent courage of the sufferers, they called their company together and went to prayer: They lifted up their voice to God with one accord*, v. 24. Not that it can be supposed that they all said the same words at the same time (though it was possible they might, being all inspired by one and the same Spirit), but one in the

name of the rest *lifted up his voice to God* and the rest joined with him, *ὁμοθυμαδὸν—with one mind* (so the word signifies); their hearts went along with him; and so, though but one spoke, they all prayed; one lifted up his voice, and, in concurrence with him, they all lifted up their hearts, which was, in effect, lifting up their voice to God; for thoughts are as words to God. *Moses cried unto God*, when we find not a word said. Now in this solemn address to God we have,

1. Their adoration of God as the Creator of the world (v. 24): *With one mind*, and so, in effect, with *one mouth*, they *glorified God*, Rom. xv. 6. They said, "O Lord, thou art God, God alone; *Δέσποτα*, thou art our Master and sovereign Ruler" (so the word signifies), "thou art God; God, and not man; God, and not the work of men's hands; the Creator of all, and not the creature of men's fancies. Thou art the God who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, the upper and lower world, and all the creatures that are in both." Thus we Christians distinguish ourselves from the heathen, that, while they worship gods which they have made, we are worshipping the God that made us and all the world. And it is very proper to begin our prayers, as well as our creed, with the acknowledgment of this, that God is the *Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible*. Though the apostles were at this time full of the mystery of the world's redemption, yet they did not forget nor overlook the history of the world's creation; for the Christian religion was intended to confirm and improve, not to eclipse nor jostle out, the truths and dictates of natural religion. It is a great encouragement to God's servants, both in doing work and suffering work, that they serve the God that made all things, and therefore has the disposal of their times, and all events concerning them, and is able to strengthen them under all their difficulties. And, if we give him the glory of this, we may take the comfort of it.

2. Their reconciling themselves to the present dispensations of Providence, by reflecting upon those scriptures in the Old Testament which foretold that the kingdom of the Messiah would meet with such opposition as this at the first setting of it up in the world, v. 25, 26. God, who made heaven and earth, cannot meet with any [effectual] opposition to his designs, since none dare [at least, can prevailingly] dispute or contest with him. Yea, thus it was written, *thus he spoke by the mouth*, thus he wrote by the pen, *of his servant David*, who, as appears by this, was the penman of the second psalm, and therefore, most probably, of the first, and other psalms that are not ascribed to any other, though they have not his name in the title. Let it not therefore be a surprise to them, nor any discouragement to any in embracing their doctrine, for the *scripture must*



*be fulfilled.* It was foretold, Ps. ii. 1, 2, (1.) That the heathen would rage at Christ and his kingdom, and be angry at the attempts to set it up, because that would be the pulling down of the gods of the heathen, and giving a check to the wickedness of the heathen. (2.) That the people would imagine all the things that could be against it, to silence the teachers of it, to discountenance the subjects of it, and to crush all the interests of it. If they prove vain things in the issue, no thanks to those who imagined them. (3.) That the kings of the earth, particularly, would stand up in opposition to the kingdom of Christ, as if they were jealous (though there is no occasion for their being so) that it would interfere with their powers, and intrench upon their prerogatives. The kings of the earth that are most favoured and honoured by divine Providence, and should do most for God, are strangers and enemies to divine grace, and do most against God. (4.) That the rulers would gather together against God and Christ; not only monarchs, that have the power in their single persons, but where the power is in many rulers, councils, and senates, they *gather together*, to consult and decree *against the Lord and against his Christ*—against both natural and revealed religion. What is done against Christ, God takes as done against himself. Christianity was not only destitute of the advantage of the countenance and support of kings and rulers (it had neither their power nor their purses), but it was opposed and fought against by them, and they combined to run it down and yet it made its way.

3. Their representation of the present accomplishment of those predictions in the enmity and malice of the rulers against Christ. What was foretold we see fulfilled, v. 27, 28. It is *of a truth*—it is certainly so, it is too plain to be denied, and in it appears the truth of the prediction that Herod and Pilate, the two Roman governors, with the Gentiles (the Roman soldiers under their command), and with the *people of Israel* (the rulers of the Jews and the mob that is under their influence), were *gathered together* in a confederacy *against thy holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed*. Some copies add another circumstance, *ἐν τῇ πόλει σου ταύτῃ*—*in this thy holy city*, where, above any place, he should have been welcomed. But herein they do *that which thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done*. See here, (1.) The wise and holy designs God had concerning Christ. He is here called the *child Jesus*, as he was called (Luke ii. 27, 43) in his infancy, to intimate that even in his exalted state he is not ashamed of his condescensions for us, and that he continues meek and lowly in heart. In the height of his glory he is the *Lamb of God*, and the *child Jesus*. But he is the *holy child Jesus* (so he was called, Luke i. 35, *that holy thing*), and *thy holy child*; the word signifies both a son and a servant *παῖδά σου*.

He was the Son of God; and yet in the work of redemption he acted as his Father's servant (Isa. xlii. 1), *My servant whom I uphold*. It was he whom God anointed, both qualified for the undertaking and called to it; and thence he was called the Lord's Christ, v. 26. And this comes in as a reason why they set themselves with so much rage and violence against him, because God had anointed him, and they were resolved not to resign, much less to submit to him. David was envied by Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed. And the Philistines came up to seek David when they heard he was anointed, 2 Sam. v. 17. Now the God that anointed Christ determined what should be done to him, pursuant to that anointing. He was anointed to be a Saviour, and therefore it was determined he should be a sacrifice to make atonement for sin. He must die—therefore he must be slain; yet not by his own hands—therefore God wisely determined before by what hands it should be done. It must be by the hands of those who will treat him as a criminal and malefactor, and therefore it cannot be done by the hands either of angels or of good men; he must therefore be *delivered into the hands of sinners* as Job was, ch. xvi. 11. And as David was delivered to Shimei to be *made a curse* (2 Sam. xvi. 11): *The Lord has bidden him*. *God's hand and his counsel determined it*—his will, and his wisdom. *God's hand*, which properly denotes his executive power, is here put for his purpose and decree, because with him saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us. His hand and his counsel always agree; for *whatsoever the Lord pleased that did he*. Dr. Hammond makes this phrase of *God's hand determining it* to be an allusion to the high priest's casting lots upon the two goats on the day of atonement (Lev. xvi. 8), in which he lifted up the hand that he happened to have the lot for the Lord in, and that goat on which it fell was immediately sacrificed; and the disposal of this lot was from the Lord, Prov. xvi. 33. Thus God's hand determined what should be done, that Christ should be the sacrifice slain. Or, if I may offer a conjecture, when God's hand is here said to determine, it may be meant, not of God's acting hand, but his writing hand, as Job. xiii. 26, *Thou writest bitter things against us*; and God's decree is said to be *that which is written in the scriptures of truth* (Dan. x. 21), and in the volume of the book it was written of Christ, Ps. xl. 7. It was *God's hand* that wrote it, his hand according to his counsel. The commission was given under his hand. (2.) The wicked and unholy instruments that were employed in the executing of this design, though they *meant not so, neither did their hearts think so*. Herod and Pilate, Gentiles and Jews, who had been at variance with each other, united against Christ. And God's serving his own purposes by what they did was no excuse at all



for their malice and wickedness in the doing of it, any more than God's making the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church extenuated the guilt of their bloody persecutors. Sin is not the less evil for God's bringing good out of it, but he is by this the more glorified, and will appear to be so when the mystery of God shall be finished.

4. Their petition with reference to the case at this time. The enemies were gathered together against Christ, and then no wonder that they were so against his ministers: the disciple is not better than his Master, nor must expect better treatment; but, being thus insulted, they pray,

(1.) That God would take cognizance of the malice of their enemies: *Now, Lord, behold their threatenings*, v. 29. Behold them, as thou art said to behold them in the psalm before quoted (Ps. ii. 4), when they thought to break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from them; he that sits in heaven laughs at them, and has them in derision; and then the virgin, the daughter of Zion, may despise the impotent menaces even of the great king, the king of Assyria, Isa. xxxvii. 22. And now, Lord; *רַא נָוּוּ* there is an emphasis upon the *now*, to intimate that then is God's time to appear for his people, when the power of their enemies is most daring and threatening. They do not dictate to God what he shall do, but refer themselves to him, like Hezekiah (Isa. xxxvii. 17): "Open thine eyes, O Lord, and see; thou knowest what they say, thou beholdest mischief and spite (Ps. x. 14); to thee we appeal, behold their threatenings, and either tie their hands or turn their hearts; make their wrath, as far as it is let loose, to praise thee, and the remainder thereof do thou restrain," Ps. lxxvi. 10. It is a comfort to us that if we be unjustly threatened, and bear it patiently, we may make ourselves easy by spreading the case before the Lord, and leaving it with him.

(2.) That God, by his grace, would keep up their spirits, and animate them to go on cheerfully with their work: *Grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word*, though the priests and rulers have enjoined them silence. Note, In threatening times, our care should not be so much that troubles may be prevented as that we may be enabled to go on with cheerfulness and resolution in our work and duty, whatever troubles we may meet with. Their prayer is not, "Lord, behold their threatenings, and frighten them, and stop their mouths, and fill their faces with shame;" but, "Behold their threatenings, and animate us, open our mouths and fill our hearts with courage." They do not pray, "Lord, give us a fair opportunity to retire from our work, now that it is become dangerous;" but, "Lord, give us grace to go on in our work, and not to be afraid of the face of man." Observe, [1.] Those that are sent on God's errands ought to deliver their message with boldness, with all bold-

ness, with all liberty of speech, *not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God*, whoever is offended; not doubting of what they say, nor of being borne out in saying it. [2.] God is to be sought unto for an ability to speak his word with boldness, and those that desire divine aids and encouragements may depend upon them, and ought to go forth and go on *in the strength of the Lord God* [3.] The threatenings of our enemies, that are designed to weaken our hands and drive us off from our work, should rather stir us up to so much the more courage and resolution in our work. Are they daring that fight against Christ? For shame, let not us be sneaking that are for him.

(3.) That God would still give them power to work miracles for the confirmation of the doctrine they preached, which, by the cure of the lame man, they found to contribute very much to their success, and would contribute abundantly to their further progress: *Lord, grant us boldness, by stretching forth thy hand to heal*. Note, Nothing emboldens faithful ministers more in their work than the tokens of God's presence with them, and a divine power going along with them. They pray, [1.] That God would stretch forth his hand to heal both the bodies and souls of men; else in vain do they stretch forth their hands, either in preaching (Isa. lxxv. 2), or in curing, ch. ix. 17. [2.] That signs and wonders might be done by the name of the holy child Jesus, which would be convincing to the people, and confounding to the enemies. Christ had promised them a power to work miracles, for the proof of their commission (Mark xvi. 17, 18); yet they must pray for it; and, though they had it, must pray for the continuance of it. Christ himself must ask, and it shall be given him. Observe, It is the honour of Christ that they aim at in this request, that the wonders might be done by the name of Jesus, the holy child Jesus, and his name shall have all the glory.

IV. The gracious answer God gave to this address, not in word, but in power. 1. God gave them a sign of the acceptance of their prayers (v. 31): *When they had prayed* (perhaps many of them prayed successively, one by one, according to the rule (1 Cor. xiv. 31), and when they had concluded the work of the day, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; there was a strong mighty wind, such as that when the Spirit was poured out upon them (ch. ii. 1, 2), which shook the house, which was now their house of prayer. This shaking of the place was designed to strike an awe upon them, to awaken and raise their expectations, and to give them a sensible token that God was with them of a truth: and perhaps it was to put them in mind of that prophecy (Hag. ii. 7), *I will shake all nations, and will fill this house with glory*. 'This was to show them what reason they had to fear God more, and then



they would fear man less. He that shook this place could make the hearts of those who threatened his servants thus to tremble, for he *cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth*. The place was shaken, that their faith might be established and unshaken. 2. God gave them greater degrees of his Spirit, which was what they prayed for. Their prayer, without doubt, was accepted, for it was answered: *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost*, more than ever; by which they were not only encouraged, but enabled to speak the word of God with boldness, and not to be afraid of the proud and haughty looks of men. The Holy Ghost taught them not only *what* to speak, but *how* to speak. Those that were endued habitually with the powers of the Holy Ghost had yet occasion for fresh supplies of the Spirit, according as the various occurrences of their service were. They were *filled with the Holy Ghost* at the bar (v. 8), and now *filled with the Holy Ghost* in the pulpit, which teaches us to live in an actual dependence upon the grace of God, according as the duty of every day requires; we need to be *anointed with fresh oil* upon every fresh occasion. As in the providence of God, so in the grace of God, we not only in general *live, and have our being*, but *move* in every particular action, ch. xvii. 28. We have here an instance of the performance of that promise, *that God will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him* (Luke xi. 13), for it was in answer to prayer that *they were filled with the Holy Ghost*: and we have also an example of the improvement of that gift, which is required of all on whom it is bestowed; have it and use it, use it and have more of it. When *they were filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke the word with all boldness*; for the *ministration of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal*. Talents must be traded with, not buried. When they find the Lord God help them by his Spirit, they know they shall not be confounded, Isa. l. 7.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And **Joses**, who by the apostles was sur-

named Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

We have a general idea given us in these verses, and it is a very beautiful one, of the spirit and state of this truly primitive church; it is *conspectus sæculi*—a view of that age of infancy and innocence.

I. The disciples loved one another dearly. Behold, how good and how pleasant it was to see how *the multitude of those that believed were of one heart, and of one soul* (v. 32), and there was no such thing as discord nor division among them. Observe here, 1. There were multitudes that believed; even in Jerusalem, where the malignant influence of the chief priests was most strong, *there were three thousand* converted on one day, and *five thousand* on another, and, besides these, *there were added to the church daily*; and no doubt they were all baptized, and made profession of the faith; for the same Spirit that endued the apostles with courage to preach the faith of Christ endued them with courage to confess it. Note, The increase of the church is the glory of it, and the multitude of those that believe, more than their quality. Now the church shines, and her light is come, when souls thus fly like a cloud into her bosom, and *like doves to their windows*, Isa. lx. 1, 8. 2. *They were all of one heart, and of one soul*. Though there were many, very many, of different ages, tempers, and conditions, in the world, who perhaps, before they believed, were perfect strangers to one another, yet, when they met in Christ, they were as intimately acquainted as if they had known one another many years. Perhaps they had been of different sects among the Jews, before their conversion, or had had discords upon civil accounts; but now these were all forgotten and laid aside, and they were unanimous in the faith of Christ, and, being all *joined to the Lord, they were joined to one another in holy love*. This was the blessed fruit of Christ's dying precept to his disciples, to *love one another*, and his dying prayer for them, *that they all might be one*. We have reason to think they divided themselves into several congregations, or worshipping assemblies, according as their dwellings were, under their respective ministers; and yet this occasioned no jealousy or uneasiness; for *they were all of one heart, and one soul*, notwithstanding; and loved those of other congregations as truly as those of their own. Thus it was then, and we may not despair of seeing it so again, *when the Spirit shall be poured out upon us from on high*.

II. The ministers went on in their work



with great vigour and success (v. 33): *With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.* The doctrine they preached was, the resurrection of Christ: a matter of fact, which served not only for the confirmation of the truth of Christ's holy religion, but being duly explained and illustrated, with the proper inferences from it, served for a summary of all the duties, privileges, and comforts of Christians. The resurrection of Christ, rightly understood and improved, will let us into the great mysteries of religion. By the great power wherewith the apostles attested the resurrection may be meant, 1. The great vigour, spirit, and courage, with which they published and avowed this doctrine; they did it not softly and diffidently, but with liveliness and resolution, as those that were themselves abundantly satisfied of the truth of it, and earnestly desired that others should be so too. Or, 2. The miracles which they wrought to confirm their doctrine. With works of great power, they gave witness to the resurrection of Christ, God himself, in them, bearing witness too.

III. The beauty of the Lord our God shone upon them, and all their performances: *Great grace was upon them all*, not only the apostles, but all the believers, *χαρις μεγάλη*—*grace that had something great in it* (magnificent and very extraordinary) *was upon them all*. 1. Christ poured out abundance of *grace upon them*, such as qualified them for great services, by enduing them with *great power*; it came upon them from on high, from above. 2. There were evident fruits of this grace in all they said and did, such as put an honour upon them, and recommended them to the favour of God, as being in his sight of *great price*. 3. Some think it includes the favour they were in with the people. Every one saw a beauty and excellency in them, and respected them.

IV. They were very liberal to the poor, and dead to this world. This was as great an evidence of the grace of God in them as any other, and recommended them as much to the esteem of the people.

1. They insisted not upon property, which even children seem to have a sense of and a jealousy for, and which worldly people triumph in, as Laban (Gen. xxxi. 43): *All that thou seest is mine*; and Nabal (1 Sam. xxv. 11): *My bread and my water*. These believers were so taken up with the hopes of an inheritance in the other world that this was as nothing to them. *No man said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own*, v. 32. They did not take away property, but they were indifferent to it. They did not call what they had their own, in a way of pride and vainglory, boasting of it, or trusting in it. They did not call it their own, because they had, in affection, forsaken all for Christ, and were continually expecting to be stripped of all for their adherence to

him. They did not say that aught was their own; for we can call nothing our own but sin. What we have in the world is more God's than our own; we have it from him, must use it for him, and are accountable for it to him. *No man said that what he had was his own*, *ἰδιον*—*his peculiar*; for he was ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and desired not to eat his morsel alone, but what he had to spare from himself and family his poor neighbours were welcome to. Those that had estates were not solicitous to lay up, but very willing to lay out, and would straiten themselves to help their brethren. No marvel that *they were of one heart and soul*, when they sat so loose to the wealth of this world; for *meum*—*mine*, and *tuum*—*thine*, are the great makebates. Men's holding their own, and grasping at more than their own, are the rise of wars and fightings.

2. They abounded in charity, so that, in effect, *they had all things common*; for (v. 34) *there was not any among them that lacked*, but care was taken for their supply. Those that had been maintained upon the public charity were probably excluded when they turned Christians, and therefore it was fit that the church should take care of them. As there were many poor that received the gospel, so there were some rich that were able to maintain them, and the grace of God made them willing. Those that gather much have nothing over, because what they have over they have for those who gather little, that they may have no lack, 2 Cor. viii. 14, 15. The gospel hath laid all things common, not so that the poor are allowed to rob the rich, but so that the rich are appointed to relieve the poor.

3. They did many of them sell their estates, to raise a fund for charity: *As many as had possession of lands or houses sold them*, v. 34. Dr. Lightfoot computes that this was the year of jubilee in the Jewish nation, the fiftieth year (the twenty-eighth since they settled in Canaan fourteen hundred years ago), so that, what was sold that year being not to return till the next jubilee, lands then took a good price, and so the sale of those lands would raise the more money. Now,

(1.) We are here told what they did with the money that was so raised: *They laid it at the apostles' feet*—they left it to them to be disposed of as they thought fit; probably they had their support from it; for whence else could they have it? Observe, The apostles would have it laid at their feet, in token of their holy contempt of the wealth of the world; they thought it fitter it should be laid at their feet than lodged in their hands or in their bosoms. Being laid there, it was not hoarded up, but *distribution was made*, by proper persons, *unto every man according as he had need*. Great care ought to be taken in the distribution of public charity, [1.] That it be given to such as have need, such as are not able to procure a competent

maintenance for themselves, through age, infancy, sickness, or bodily disability, or incapacity of mind, want either of ingenuity or activity, cross providences, losses, oppressions, or a numerous charge. Those who upon any of these accounts, or any other, have real need, and have not relations of their own to help them—but, above all, those that are reduced to want for well doing, and for the testimony of a good conscience, ought to be taken care of, and provided for, and, with such a prudent application of what is given, as may be most for their benefit. [2.] That it be given to every man for whom it is intended, according as he has need, without partiality or respect of persons. It is a rule in dispensing charity, as well as in administering justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*—that those who are equally needy and equally deserving should be equally helped, and that the charity should be suited and adapted to the necessity, as the word is.

(2.) Here is one particular person mentioned that was remarkable for this generous charity: it was Barnabas, afterwards Paul's colleague. Observe, [1.] The account here given concerning him, v. 36. His name was *Joses*; he was of the tribe of *Levi*, for there were Levites among the Jews of the dispersion, who, it is probable, presided in their synagogue-worship, and, according to the duty of that tribe, taught them the good knowledge of the Lord. He was born in Cyprus, a great way off from Jerusalem, his parents, though Jews, having a settlement there. Notice is taken of the apostles' changing his name after he associated with them. It is probable that he was one of the seventy disciples, and, as he increased in gifts and graces, grew eminent, and was respected by the apostles, who, in token of their value for him, gave him a name, *Barnabas*—the son of prophecy (so it properly signifies), he being endued with extraordinary gifts of prophecy. But the Hellenist Jews (saith Grotius) called praying παράκλησις, and therefore by that word it is rendered here: *A son of exhortation* (so some), one that had an excellent faculty of healing and persuading; we have an instance of it, ch. xi. 22—24. *A son of consolation* (so we read it); one that did himself walk very much in the comforts of the Holy Ghost—a cheerful Christian, and this enlarged his heart in charity to the poor; or one that was eminent for comforting the Lord's people, and speaking peace to wounded troubled consciences; he had an admirable facility that way. There were two among the apostles that were called *Boanerges*—sons of thunder (Mark iii. 17); but here was a son of consolation with them. Each had his several gift. Neither must censure the other, but both ease one another; let the one search the wound, and then let the other heal it and bind it up. [2.] Here is an account of his charity, and great generosity to the public. This is particularly taken notice of,

because of the eminency of his services afterwards in the church of God, especially in carrying the gospel to the Gentiles; and, that this might not appear to come from any ill-will to his own nation, we have here his benevolence to the Jewish converts. Or perhaps this is mentioned because it was a leading card, and an example to others: *He having land*, whether in Cyprus, where he was born, or in Judea, where he now lived, or elsewhere, is not certain, but *he sold it*, not to buy elsewhere to advantage, but, as a Levite indeed, who knew he had the Lord God of Israel for his inheritance, he despised earthly inheritances, would be encumbered no more with them, but brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet, to be given in charity. Thus, as one that was designed to be a preacher of the gospel, he disentangled himself from the affairs of this life: and he lost nothing upon the balance of the account, by laying the purchase-money at the apostles' feet, when he himself was, in effect, numbered among the apostles, by that word of the Holy Ghost, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*, ch. xiii. 2. Thus, for the respect he showed to the apostles as apostles, he had an apostles' reward.

## CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have, I. The sin and punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, who, for lying to the Holy Ghost, were struck dead at the word of Peter, ver. 1—11. II. The flourishing state of the church, in the power that went along with the preaching of the gospel, ver. 12—16. III. The imprisonment of the apostles, and their miraculous discharge out of prison, with fresh orders to go on to preach the gospel, which they did, to the great vexation of their persecutors, ver. 17—26. IV. Their arraignments before the great sanhedrim, and their justification of themselves in what they did, ver. 27—33. V. Gamaliel's counsel concerning them, that they should not persecute them, but let them alone, and see what would come of it, and their concurrence, for the present, with this advice, in the dismissal of the apostles with no more than a scourging, ver. 34—40. VI. The apostles' cheerful progress in their work notwithstanding the prohibition laid upon them and the indignity done them, ver. 41, 42.

**B**UT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.



7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

The chapter begins with a melancholy *but*, which puts a stop to the pleasant and agreeable prospect of things which we had in the foregoing chapters; as every man, so every church, in its best state has its *but*. 1. The disciples were very holy, and heavenly, and seemed to be all exceedingly good; *but* there were hypocrites among them, whose hearts were not right in the sight of God, who, when they were baptized, and took upon them the *form of godliness, denied the power of godliness*, and stopped short of that. There is a mixture of bad with good in the best societies on this side heaven; tares will grow among the wheat until the harvest. 2. It was the praise of the disciples that they came up to that perfection which Christ recommended to the rich young man—they *sold what they had, and gave to the poor*; *but* even that proved a cloak and cover of hypocrisy which was thought the greatest proof and evidence of sincerity. 3. The signs and wonders which the apostles wrought were hitherto miracles of mercy; *but* now comes in a miracle of judgment, and here is an instance of severity following the instances of goodness, that God may be both loved and feared. Observe here,

I. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira his wife. It is good to see husband and wife joining together in that which is good, but to be confederate in evil is to be like Adam and Eve, when they agreed to eat the forbidden fruit, and were one in their disobedience. Now their sin was, 1. That they were ambitious of being thought eminent disciples, and of the first rank, when really they were not true disciples; they would pass for some of the most fruitful trees in Christ's vineyard, when really the root of the matter was not found in them. They *sold a possession, and brought the money (as Barnabas did) to the apostles' feet*, that

they might not seem to be behind the very chief of believers, but might be applauded and cried up, and stand so much the fairer for preferment in the church, which perhaps they thought would shortly shine in secular pomp and grandeur. Note, It is possible that hypocrites may deny themselves in one thing, but then it is to serve themselves in another; they may forego their secular advantage in one instance, with a prospect of finding their account in something else. Ananias and Sapphira would take upon them a profession of Christianity, and *make a fair show in the flesh* with it, and so would mock God, and deceive others, when they knew they could not go through with the Christian profession. It was commendable, and so far it was right, in that rich young man, that he would not pretend to follow Christ, when, if it should come to a pinch, he knew he could not come up to his terms, *but he went away sorrowful*. Ananias and Sapphira pretended they could come up to the terms, that they might have the credit of being disciples, when really they could not, and so were a discredit to discipleship. Note, It is often of fatal consequence for people to go a greater length in profession than their inward principle will admit of. 2. That they were covetous of the wealth of the world, and distrustful of God and his providence: *They sold their land*, and perhaps then, in a pang of zeal, designed no other than to dedicate the whole of the purchase-money to pious uses, and made a vow, or at least conceived a full purpose, to do so; but, when the money was received, their heart failed them, and *they kept back part of the price* (v. 2), because they loved the money, and thought it was too much to part with at once, and to trust in the apostles' hands, and because they knew not but they might want it themselves; though now all things were common, yet it would not be so long, and what should they do in a time of need, if they should leave themselves nothing to take to? They could not take God's word that they should be provided for, but thought they would play a wiser part than the rest had done, and lay up for a rainy day. Thus they thought to serve both God and mammon—God, by bringing part of the money to the apostles' feet, and mammon, by keeping the other part in their own pockets; as if there were not an all-sufficiency in God to make up the whole to them, except they retained some in their own hands by way of caution-money. Their hearts were divided, so *they were found faulty*, Hos. x. 2. They *halted between two*; if they had been thorough-paced worldlings, they would not have sold their possession; and, if they had been thorough-paced Christians, they would not have detained part of the price. 3. That they thought to deceive the apostles, and make them believe they brought the whole purchase-money, when really it was but a part. They came with as good an assurance. and as

great a show of piety and devotion, as any of them, and laid the money at the apostles' feet, as if it were their all. They dissembled with God and his Spirit, with Christ and his church and ministers; and this was their sin.

II. The indictment of Ananias, which proved both his condemnation and execution for this sin. When he brought the money, and expected to be commended and encouraged, as others were, Peter took him to task about it. He, without any enquiry or examination of witnesses concerning it, charges him peremptorily with the crime, and aggravates it, and lays a load upon him for it, showing it to him in its own colour, v. 3, 4. The Spirit of God in Peter not only discovered the fact without any information (when perhaps no man in the world knew it but the man and his wife themselves), but likewise discerned the principle of reigning infidelity in the heart of Ananias, which was at the bottom of it, and therefore proceeded against him so suddenly. Had it been a sin of infirmity, through the surprise of a temptation, Peter would have taken Ananias aside, and have bidden him go home, and fetch the rest of the money, and repent of his folly in attempting to put this cheat upon them; but he knew that his heart was fully set in him to do this evil, and therefore allowed him not space to repent. He here showed him,

1. The origin of his sin: *Satan filled his heart*; he not only suggested it to him, and put it into his head, but hurried him on with resolution to do it. Whatever is contrary to the good Spirit proceeds from the evil spirit, and those hearts are filled by Satan in which worldliness reigns, and has the ascendant. Some think that Ananias was one of those that had received the Holy Ghost, and was filled with his gifts, but, having provoked the Spirit to withdraw from him, now Satan filled his heart; as, when the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, an evil spirit from God troubled him. Satan is a lying spirit; he was so in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, and so he was in the mouth of Ananias, and by this made it appear that he filled his heart.

2. The sin itself: *He lied to the Holy Ghost*; a sin of such a heinous nature that he could not have been guilty of it if Satan had not filled his heart.

(1.) The phrase which we render *lying to the Holy Ghost*, ψεύσασθαι, αὐτὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, some read, *to belie the Holy Ghost*, which may be taken two ways: [1.] That he belied the Holy Ghost in himself; so Dr. Lightfoot takes it, and supposes that Ananias was not an ordinary believer, but a minister, and one that had received the gift of the Holy Ghost with the hundred and twenty (for mention is made of him immediately after Barnabas); yet he durst thus, by dissembling, belie and shame that gift. Or thus; Those who had sold their estates, and laid the money at the apostles' feet, did it by the special

impulse of the Holy Ghost, enabling them to do an act so very great and generous; and Ananias pretended that he was moved by the Holy Ghost to do what he did, as others were; whereas it appeared by his baseness that he was not under the influence of good Spirit at all; for, had it been his work, it would have been perfect. [2.] That he belied the Holy Ghost in the apostles, to whom he brought the money; he misrepresented the Spirit they were actuated by, either by a suspicion that they would not faithfully distribute what they were entrusted with (which was a base suggestion, as if they were false to the trust reposed in them), or by an assurance that they could not discover the fraud. He belied the Holy Ghost when by what he did he would have it thought that those who are endued with the gifts of the Holy Ghost might as easily be imposed upon as other men; like Gehazi, whom his master convicted of his error by that word, *Went not my heart with thee?* 2 Kings v. 26. It is charged upon the house of Israel and Judah, when, like Ananias here, they dealt very treacherously, that they belied the Lord, saying, *It is not he*, Jer. v. 11, 12. Thus Ananias thought the apostles were altogether such as himself, and this was belying the Holy Ghost in them, as if he were not in them a discernor of spirits, whereas they had all the gifts of the Spirit in them, which to others were divided severally. See 1 Cor. xii. 8—11. Those that pretend to an inspiration of the Spirit, in imposing upon the church their own fancies, either in opinion or practice—that say they are moved from above when they are carried on by their pride, covetousness, or affectation of dominion, belie the Holy Ghost.

(2.) But we read it, *to lie unto the Holy Ghost*, which reading is countenanced by v. 4, *Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God*. [1.] Ananias told a lie, a deliberate lie, and with a purpose to deceive; he told Peter that he had sold a possession (house or lands) and this was the purchase-money. Perhaps he expressed himself in words that were capable of a double meaning, used some equivocations about it, which he thought might palliate the matter a little, and save him from the guilt of a downright lie: or perhaps he said nothing; but it was all one, he did as the rest did who brought the whole price, and would be thought to do so, and expected the praise those had that did so, and the same privilege and access to the common stock as they had; and therefore it was an implicit protestation that he brought the whole price, as they did; and this was a lie, for he kept back part. Note, Many are brought to gross lying by reigning pride, and affectation of the applause of men, particularly in works of charity to the poor. That therefore we may not be found boasting of a false gift given to us, or given by us (Prov. xxv. 14), we must not boast even of a true



gift, which is the meaning of our Saviour's caution in works of charity, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*. Those that boast of good works they never did, or promise good works they never do, or make the good works they do more or better than really they are, come under the guilt of Ananias's lie, which it concerns us all to dread the thought of. [2.] He told this lie to the Holy Ghost. It was not so much to the apostles as to the Holy Ghost in them that the money was brought, and that was said which was said, v. 4, *Thou hast not lied unto men* (not to men only, not to men chiefly, though the apostles be but men), *but thou hast lied unto God*. Hence it is justly inferred that the Holy Ghost is God; for he that lieth to the Holy Ghost lieth to God. "Those that lied to the apostles, actuated and acting by the Spirit of God, are said to lie to God, because the apostles acted by the power and authority of God, whence it follows (as Dr. Whitby well observes) that the power and authority of the Spirit must be the power and authority of God." And, as he further argues, "Ananias is said to lie to God, because he lied to that Spirit in the apostles which enabled them to discern the secrets of men's hearts and actions, which being the property of God alone, he that lies to him must therefore lie to God, because he lies to one who has the incommunicable property of God, and consequently the divine essence."

3. The aggravations of the sin (v. 4): *While it remained, was it not thine own? And, after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?* Which may be understood two ways:—(1.) "Thou wast under no temptation to keep back part of the price; before it was sold it was thy own, and not mortgaged nor encumbered, nor any way engaged for debt; and when it was sold it was in thy own power to dispose of the money at thy pleasure; so that thou mightest as well have brought the whole as a part. Thou hadst no debts to pay, perhaps no children to provide for; so that thou wast not under the influence of any particular inducement to keep back part of the price. Thou wast a transgressor without a cause." Or, (2.) "Thou wast under no necessity of selling thy land at all, nor bringing any of the money to the apostles' feet. Thou mightest have kept the money, if thou hadst pleased, and the land too, and never have pretended to this piece of perfection." This rule of charity the apostle gives, that people be not pressed, and that it be not urged as of necessity, because God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. ix. 7), and Philemon must do a good work, *not as it were of necessity, but willingly*, Philem. 14. As it is better not to vow than to vow and not to pay, so better had it been for him not to have sold his land at all than thus to keep back part of the price; not to have pretended to do the good work than thus to do it by halves. "When it was sold, it was in thine

own power; but it was no so when it was vowed: thou hadst then opened thy mouth to the Lord, and couldst not go back. Thus, in giving our hearts to God, we are not admitted to divide them. Satan, like the mother whose own the child was not, would take up with a half; but God will have all or none.

4. All this guilt, thus aggravated, is charged upon him: *Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?* Observe, Though Satan filled his heart to do it, yet he is said to have conceived it in his own heart, which shows that we cannot extenuate our sins by laying the fault of them upon the devil; he tempts, but he cannot force; it is of our own lusts that we are drawn away and enticed. The evil thing, whatever it is, that is said or done, the sinner has conceived it in his own heart; and therefore, *if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*. The close of the charge is very high, but very just: *Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God*. What emphasis does the prophet lay upon that of Ahaz, *not wearying men only, but wearying my God also!* Isa. vii. 13. And Moses upon that of Israel, *Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord!* Exod. xvi. 8. So here, Thou mightest have imposed upon us, who are men like thyself; but, *be not deceived, God is not mocked*. If we think to put a cheat upon God, we shall prove in the end to have put a fatal cheat upon our own souls.

III. The death and burial of Ananias, v. 5, 6.

1. He died upon the spot: *Ananias, hearing these words, was speechless*, in the same sense that he was who was charged with intruding into the wedding feast without a wedding garment: he had nothing to say for himself; but this was not all: he was struck speechless with a witness, for he was struck dead: *He fell down, and gave up the ghost*. It does not appear whether Peter designed and expected that this would follow upon what he said to him; it is probable that he did, for to Sapphira his wife Peter particularly spoke death, v. 9. Some think that an angel struck him, that he died, as Herod, ch. xii. 23. Or, his own conscience smote him with such horror and amazement at the sense of his guilt, that he sunk and died away under the load of it. And perhaps, when he was convicted of lying to the Holy Ghost, he remembered the unpardonableness of the *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, which struck him like a dagger to the heart. See the power of the word of God in the mouth of the apostles. As it was to some a *savour of life unto life*, so it was to others a *savour of death unto death*. As there are those whom the gospel justifies, so there are those whom it condemns. This punishment of Ananias may seem severe, but we are sure it was just. (1.) It was designed to maintain the honour of the Holy Ghost as now lately poured out upon the apostles, in order to the setting up of the gospel kingdom. It was a great affront

which Ananias put upon the Holy Ghost, as if he could be imposed upon: and it had a direct tendency to invalidate the apostles' testimony; for, if they could not by the Spirit discover this fraud, how could they by this Spirit discover the deep things of God, which they were to reveal to the children of men? It was therefore necessary that the credit of the apostles' gifts and powers should be supported, though it was at this expense. (2.) It was designed to deter others from the like presumptions, now at the beginning of this dispensation. Simon Magus afterwards was not thus punished, nor Elymas; but Ananias was made an example now at first, that, with the sensible proofs given what a comfortable thing it is to receive the Spirit, there might be also sensible proofs given what a dangerous thing it is to resist the Spirit, and do despite to him. How severely was the worshipping of the golden calf punished, and the gathering of sticks on the sabbath-day, when the laws of the second and fourth commandments were now newly given! So was the offering of strange fire by Nadab and Abihu, and the mutiny of Korah and his company, when the fire from heaven was now newly given, and the authority of Moses and Aaron now newly established. The doing of this by the ministry of Peter, who himself with a lie denied his Master but a little while ago, intimates that it was not the resentment of a wrong done to himself; for then he, who had himself been faulty, would have had charity for those that offended; and he, who himself had repented and been forgiven, would have forgiven this affront, and endeavoured to bring this offender to repentance; but it was the act of the Spirit of God in Peter to him the indignity was done, and by him the punishment was inflicted.

2. He was buried immediately, for this was the manner of the Jews (v. 6): *The young men*, who it is probable were appointed to that office in the church of burying the dead, as among the Romans the *libitinarii* and *pol-linctores*; or the young men that attended the apostles, and waited on them, they *wound up* the dead body in grave-clothes, *carried it out* of the city, and *buried it* decently, though he died in sin, and by an immediate stroke of divine vengeance.

IV. The reckoning with Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, who perhaps was first in the transgression, and tempted her husband to eat this forbidden fruit. *She came in* to the place where the apostles were, which, as it should seem, was Solomon's porch, for there we find them (v. 12), a part of the temple where Christ used to walk, John x. 23. *She came in about three hours after*, expecting to share in the thanks of the house for her coming in, and consenting to the sale of the land, of which perhaps she was entitled to her dower or thirds; for *she knew not what had been done*. It was strange that nobody ran to tell her of the sudden death of her husband, that she

might keep away; perhaps some one did, and she was not at home; and so when she came to present herself before the apostles, as a benefactor to the fund, she met with a breach instead of a blessing.

1. She was found guilty of sharing with her husband in his sin, by a question that Peter asked her (v. 8): *Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?* naming the sum which Ananias had brought and laid at the apostles' feet. "Was this all you received for the sale of the land, and had you no more for it?" "No," saith she, "we had no more, but that was every farthing we received." Ananias and his wife agreed to tell the same story, and the bargain being private, and by consent kept to themselves, nobody could disprove them, and therefore they thought they might safely stand in the lie, and should gain credit to it. It is sad to see those relations who should quicken one another to that which is good harden one another in that which is evil.

2. Sentence was passed upon her, that she should partake in her husband's doom, v. 9.

(1.) Her sin is opened: *How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?* Before he passes sentence, he makes her to know her abominations, and shows her the evil of her sin. Observe, [1.] That they tempted the Spirit of the Lord; as Israel tempted God in the desert, when they said, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not?* after they had seen so many miraculous proofs of his power; and not only his presence, but his presidency, when they said, *Can God furnish a table?* So here, "Can the Spirit in the apostles discover this fraud? Can they discern that this is but a part of the price, when we tell them it is the whole?" *Can he judge through this dark cloud?* Job xxii. 13. They saw that the apostles had the gift of tongues; but had they the gift of discerning spirits? Those that presume upon security and impunity in sin tempt the Spirit of God; they tempt God as if he were altogether such a one as themselves. [2.] That they agreed together to do it, making the bond of their relation to each other (which by the divine institution is a sacred tie) to become a bond of iniquity. It is hard to say which is worse between yoke-fellows and other relations—a discord in good or concord in evil. It seems to intimate that their agreeing together to do it was a further tempting of the Spirit; as if, when they had engaged to keep one another's counsel in this matter, even the Spirit of the Lord himself could not discover them. Thus they *digged deep to hide their counsel from the Lord*, but were made to know it is in vain. "How is it that you are thus infatuated? What strange stupidity has seized you, that you would venture to make trial of that which is past dispute? How is it that you, who are baptized Christians, do not understand yourselves better? How durst you run to great a risk?"



(2) Her doom is read: *Behold, the feet of those who have buried thy husband are at the door* (perhaps he heard them coming, or knew that they could not be long), *and they shall carry thee out.* As Adam and Eve, who agreed to eat the forbidden fruit, were turned together out of paradise, so Ananias and Sapphira, who agreed to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, were together chased out of the world.

3. The sentence executed itself. There needed no executioner, a killing power went along with Peter's word, as sometimes a healing power did; for the God in whose name he spoke *kills and makes alive*; and out of his mouth (and Peter was now his mouth) *both evil, and good proceed* (v. 10): *Then fell she down straightway at his feet.* Some sinners God makes quick work with, while others he bears long with; for which difference, doubtless, there are good reasons; but he is not accountable to us for them. She heard not till now that her husband was dead, the notice of which, with the discovery of her sin, and the sentence of death passed upon her, struck her as a thunderbolt and took her away as with a whirlwind. And many instances there are of sudden deaths which are not to be looked upon as the punishment of some gross sin, like this. We must not think that all who die suddenly are sinners above others; perhaps it is in favour to them, that they have a quick passage: however, it is forewarning to all to be always ready. But here it is plain that it was in judgment. Some put the question concerning the eternal state of Ananias and Sapphira, and incline to think that the destruction of the flesh was that *the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* And I should go in with that charitable opinion if there had been any space given them to repent, as there was to the incestuous Corinthian. But secret things belong not to us. It is said, *She fell down at Peter's feet*; there, where she should have laid the whole price and did not; she was herself laid, as it were to make up the deficiency. The *young men* that had the care of funerals coming in *found her dead*; and it is not said, *They wound her up*, as they did Ananias, but, *They carried her out* as she was, *and buried her by her husband*; and probably an inscription was set over their graves, intimating that they were joint-monuments of divine wrath against those that lie to the Holy Ghost. Some ask whether the apostles kept the money which they did bring, and concerning which they lied? I am apt to think they did; they had not the superstition of those who said, *It is not lawful for us to put it into the treasury*: for unto the pure all things are pure. What they brought was not polluted to those to whom they brought it; but what they kept back was polluted to those that kept it back. Use was made of the censers of Korah's mutineers.

V. The impression that this made upon

the people. Notice is taken of this in the midst of the story (v. 5): *Great fear came upon all that heard these things*, that heard what Peter said, and saw what followed; or upon all that heard the story of it; for, no doubt, it was all the talk of the city. And again (v. 11), *Great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.* 1. Those that had joined themselves to the church were thereby struck with an awe of God and of his judgments, and with a greater veneration for this dispensation of the Spirit which they were now under. It was not a damp or check to their holy joy, but it taught them to be serious in it, and to rejoice with trembling. All that laid their money at the apostles' feet after this were afraid of keeping back any part of the price. 2. All that heard it were put into a consternation by it, and were ready to say, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God and his Spirit in the apostles?* As 1 Sam. vi. 20.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about: unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

We have here an account of the progress of the gospel, notwithstanding this terrible judgment inflicted upon two hypocrites.

1. Here is a general account of the miracles which the apostles wrought (v. 12): *By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people*, many miracles of mercy for one of judgment. Now the gospel power returned to its proper channel, which is that of mercy and grace. God had come out of his place to punish, but now returns to his place, to his mercy-seat again. The miracles they wrought proved their divine mission. They were not a few, but many, of divers kinds and often repeated; they were signs and wonders, such wonders as were confessedly signs of a divine presence and power. They were not done in a corner, but among the people, who were at liberty to enquire into them, and, if there



had been any fraud or collusion in them, would have discovered it.

II. We are here told what were the effects of these miracles which the apostles wrought.

1. The church was hereby kept together, and confirmed in its adherence both to the apostles and to one another. *They of the church were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.* (1.) They met in the temple, in the open place that was called Solomon's porch. It was strange that the rulers of the temple suffered them to keep their meeting there. But God inclined their hearts to tolerate them there awhile, for the more convenient spreading of the gospel; and those who permitted buyers and sellers could not for shame prohibit such preachers and healers there. They all met in public worship; so early was the institution of religious assemblies observed in the church, which must by no means be forsaken or let fall, for in them a profession of religion is kept up. (2.) They were there with one accord, unanimous in their doctrine, worship, and discipline; and there was no discontent nor murmuring about the death of Ananias and Sapphira, as there was against Moses and Aaron about the death of Korah and his company: *You have killed the people of the Lord*, Num. xvi. 41. The separation of hypocrites, by distinguishing judgments, should make the sincere cleave so much the closer to each other and to the gospel ministry.

2. It gained the apostles, who were the prime ministers in Christ's kingdom, very great respect. (1.) The other ministers kept their distance: *Of the rest of their company durst no man join himself to them*, as their equal or an associate with them; though others of them were endued with the Holy Ghost, and spoke with tongues, yet none of them at this time did such signs and wonders as the apostles did: and therefore they acknowledged their superiority, and in every thing yielded to them. (2.) *All the people magnified them*, and had them in great veneration, spoke of them with respect, and represented them as the favourites of Heaven, and unspeakable blessings to this earth. Though the chief priests vilified them, and did all they could to make them contemptible, this did not hinder the people from magnifying them, who saw the thing in a true light. Observe, The apostles were far from magnifying themselves; they transmitted the glory of all they did very carefully and faithfully to Christ, and yet the people magnified them; for those that humble themselves shall be exalted, and those honoured that honour God only.

3. The church increased in number (v. 14): *Believers were the more added to the Lord*, and no doubt joined themselves to the church, when they saw that God was in it of a truth, even multitudes both of men and women. They were so far from being deterred by the example that was made of Ananias and Sapphira that they were rather invited

by it into a society that kept such a strict discipline. Observe, (1.) Believers are added to the Lord Jesus, joined to him, and so joined to his mystical body, from which nothing can separate us and cut us off, but that which separates us and cuts us off from Christ. Many have been brought to the Lord, and yet there is room for others to be added to him; added to the number of those that are united to him; and additions will still be making till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the number of the elect accomplished. (2.) Notice is taken of the conversion of women, as well as men; more notice than generally was in the Jewish church, in which they neither received the sign of circumcision nor were obliged to attend the solemn feasts; and the court of the women was one of the outer courts of the temple. But, as among those that followed Christ while he was upon earth, so among those that believed on him after he went to heaven, great notice was taken of the good women.

4. The apostles had abundance of patients, and gained abundance of reputation both to themselves and their doctrine by the cure of them all, v. 15, 16. So many signs and wonders were wrought by the apostles that all manner of people put in for the benefit of them, both in city and country, and had it. (1.) In the city: *They brought forth their sick into the streets*; for it is probable that the priests would not suffer them to bring them into the temple to Solomon's porch, and the apostles had not leisure to go to the houses of them all. And they laid them on beds and couches (because they were so weak that they could neither go nor stand), *that at the least the shadow of Peter, passing by, might overshadow some of them*, though it could not reach them all; and, it should seem, it had the desired effect, as the woman's touch of the hem of Christ's garment had; and in this, among other things, that word of Christ was fulfilled, *Greater works than these shall you do*: God expresses his care of his people, by his being their shade on their right hand; and the benign influences of Christ as a king are compared to the shadow of a great rock. Peter comes between them and the sun, and so heals them, cuts them off from a dependence upon creature sufficiency as insufficient, that they may expect help only from that Spirit of grace with whom he was filled. And, if such miracles were wrought by Peter's shadow, we have reason to think they were so by the other apostles, as by the handkerchiefs from Paul's body (ch. xix. 12), no doubt both being with an actual intention in the minds of the apostles thus to heal; so that it is absurd to infer hence a healing virtue in the relics of saints that are dead and gone; we read not of any cured by the relics of Christ himself, after he was gone, as certainly we should if there had been any such thing. (2.) In the country towns: Multitudes came to Jerusalem from the ci-



*ties round about, bringing sick folks that were afflicted in body, and those that were vexed with unclean spirits, that were troubled in mind, and they were healed every one; dis-tempered bodies and distempered minds were set to rights.* Thus opportunity was given to the apostles, both to convince people's judgments by these miracles of the heavenly origin of the doctrine they preached, and also to engage people's affections both to them and it, by giving them a specimen of its beneficial tendency to the welfare of this lower world.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, 18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, 20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. 21 And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, 23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. 24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

Never did any good work go on with any hope of success, but it met with opposition; those that are bent to do mischief cannot be reconciled to those who make it their business to do good. Satan, the destroyer of mankind, ever was, and will be, an adversary to those who are the benefactors of mankind; and it would have been strange if the apostles had gone on thus teaching and healing and had had no check. In these verses we have the malice of hell and the grace of heaven struggling about them, the one to drive

them off from this good work, the other to animate them in it,

I. The priests were enraged at them, and shut them up in prison, v. 17, 18. Observe, 1. Who their enemies and persecutors were. The high priest was the ringleader, Annas or Caiaphas, who saw their wealth and dignity, their power and tyranny, that is, their all, at stake, and inevitably lost, if the spiritual and heavenly doctrine of Christ should get ground and prevail among the people. Those that were most forward to join with the high priest herein were the *sect of the Sadducees*, who had a particular enmity to the gospel of Christ, because it confirmed and established the doctrine of the invisible world, the resurrection of the dead, and the future state, which they denied. It is not strange if men of no religion be bigoted in their opposition to true and pure religion. 2. How they were affected towards them, ill affected, and exasperated to the last degree. When they heard and saw what flocking there was to the apostles, and how considerable they were become, they *rose up* in a passion, as men that could no longer bear it, and were resolved to make head against it, being *filled with indignation* at the apostles for preaching the doctrine of Christ, and curing the sick,—at the people for hearing them, and bringing the sick to them to be cured,—and at themselves and their own party for suffering this matter to go so far, and not knocking it on the head at first. Thus are the enemies of Christ and his gospel a torment to themselves. *Envy slays the silly one.* 3. How they proceeded against them (v. 18): *They laid their hands on them*, perhaps their own hands (so low did their malice make them stoop), or, rather, the hands of their officers, and *put them in the common prison*, among the worst of malefactors. Hereby they designed, (1.) To put a restraint upon them; though they could not lay any thing criminal to their charge worthy of death or of bonds, yet while they had them in prison they kept them from going on in their work, and this they reckoned a good point gained. Thus early were the ambassadors of Christ in bonds. (2.) To put a terror upon them, and so to drive them off from their work. The last time they had them before them, they only threatened them (ch. iv. 21); but now, finding that this did not do, they imprisoned them, to make them afraid of them. (3.) To put a disgrace upon them, and therefore they chose to clap them up in the common prison, that, being thus vilified, the people might not, as they had done, magnify them. Satan has carried on his design against the gospel very much by making the preachers and professors of it appear despicable.

II. God sent his angel to release them out of prison, and to renew their commission to preach the gospel. The powers of darkness fight against them, but the Father of lights fights for them, and sends an angel of light

to plead their cause. The Lord will never desert his witnesses, his advocates, but will certainly stand by them, and bear them out.

1. The apostles are discharged, legally discharged, from their imprisonment (v. 19): *The angel of the Lord by night*, in spite of all the locks and bars that were upon them, *opened the prison doors*, and, in spite of all the vigilance and resolution of the keepers that *stood without before the doors, brought forth the prisoners* (see v. 23), gave them authority to go out without crime, and led them through all opposition. This deliverance is not so particularly related as that of Peter (ch. xii. 7, &c.); but the miracle here was the very same. Note, There is no prison so dark, so strong, but God can both visit his people in it, and, if he pleases, fetch them out of it. This discharge of the apostles out of prison by an angel was a resemblance of Christ's resurrection, and his discharge out of the prison of the grave, and would help to confirm the apostles' preaching of it.

2. They are charged, and legally charged, to go on with their work, so as thereby to be discharged from the prohibition which the high priest laid them under; the angel bade them, *Go, stand, and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life*, v. 20. When they were miraculously set at liberty, they must not think it was that they might save their lives by making their escape out of the hands of their enemies. No; it was that they might go on with their work with so much the more boldness. Recoveries from sickness, releases out of trouble, are granted us, and are to be looked upon by us as granted, not that we may enjoy the comforts of our life, but that God may be honoured with the services of our life. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*, Ps. cxix. 175. *Bring my soul out of prison* (as the apostles here), *that I may praise thy name*, Ps. cxlii. 7. See Isa. xxxviii. 22. Now in this charge given them, observe, (1.) Where they must preach: *Speak in the temple*. One would think, though they might not quit their work, yet it had been prudent to go on with it in a more private place, where it would give less offence to the priests than in the temple, and so would the less expose them. No; "Speak in the temple, for this is the place of concourse, this is your Father's house, and it is not to be as yet quite left desolate." It is not for the preachers of Christ's gospel to retire into corners, as long as they can have any opportunity of preaching in the great congregation. (2.) To whom they must preach: "*Speak to the people*; not to the princes and rulers, for they will not hearken; but to the people, who are willing and desirous to be taught, and whose souls are as precious to Christ, and ought to be so to you, as the souls of the greatest. Speak to the people, to all in general, for all are concerned." (3.) How they must preach: *Go,*

*stand, and speak*, which intimates, not only that they must speak publicly, stand up and speak, that all may hear; but that they must speak boldly and resolutely: *Stand and speak*; that is, "Speak it as those that resolve to stand to it, to live and die by it." (4.) What they must speak: *All the words of this life*. *This life* which you have been speaking of among yourselves, referring perhaps to the conferences concerning heaven which they had among themselves for their own and one another's encouragement in prison: "Go, and preach the same to the world, that others may be comforted with the same comforts with which you yourselves are comforted of God." Or, "of this life which the Sadducees deny, and therefore persecute you; preach this, though you know it is this that they have indignation at." Or, "of this life emphatically; this heavenly, divine life, in comparison with which the present earthly life does not deserve the name." Or, "*these words of life*, the very same you have preached, these words which the Holy Ghost puts into your mouth." Note, The words of the gospel are the words of life, quickening words; they are spirit, and they are life; *words whereby we may be saved*—that is the same with this here, ch. xi. 14. The gospel is the word of this life, for it secures to us the privileges of our way as well as those of our home, and the promises of the life that now is as well as of that to come. And yet even spiritual and eternal life are brought so much to light in the gospel that they may be called *this life*; for the word is nigh thee. Note, The gospel is concerning matters of life and death, and ministers must preach it and people hear it accordingly. They must speak *all the words of this life*, and not conceal any for fear of offending, or in hope of ingratiating themselves with their rulers. Christ's witnesses are sworn to speak the whole truth.

III. They went on with their work (v. 21): *When they heard this*, when they heard that it was the will of God that they should continue to preach in the temple, they *returned to Solomon's porch*, v. 12. 1. It was a great satisfaction to them to have these fresh orders. Perhaps they began to question whether, if they had their liberty, they should preach as publicly in the temple as they had done, because they had been told, when they were *persecuted in one city, to flee to another*. But, now that the angel ordered them to go preach in the temple, their way was plain, and they ventured without any difficulty, entered into the temple, and feared not the face of man. Note, If we may but be satisfied concerning our duty, our business is to keep close to this, and then we may cheerfully trust God with our safety. (2.) They set themselves immediately to execute them, without dispute or delay. They *entered into the temple early in the morning* (as soon as the gates were opened, and people began



to come together there), and taught them the gospel of the kingdom: and did not at all fear what man could do unto them. The case here was extraordinary: the whole treasure of the gospel is lodged in their hands; if they be silent now the springs are shut up, and the whole work falls to the ground and is made to cease, which is not the case of ordinary ministers, who therefore are not by this example bound to throw themselves into the mouth of danger; and yet when God gives opportunity of doing good, though we be under the restraint and terror of human powers, we should venture far rather than let go such an opportunity.

IV. The high priest and his party went on with their prosecution, v. 21. They, supposing they had the apostles sure enough, called the council together, a great and extraordinary council, for they summoned all the senate of the children of Israel. See here,

1. How they were prepared, and how big with expectation, to crush the gospel of Christ and the preachers of it, for they raised the whole posse. The last time they had the apostles in custody they convened them only before a committee of those that were of the kindred of the high priest, who were obliged to act cautiously; but now, that they might proceed further and with more assurance, they called together, *πᾶσαν τὴν γερουσίαν*—all the eldership, that is (says Dr. Lightfoot), all the three courts or benches of judges in Jerusalem, not only the great sanhedrim, consisting of seventy elders, but the other two judicatories that were erected one in the outer-court gate of the temple, the other in the inner or beautiful gate, consisting of twenty-three judges each; so that, if there was a full appearance, here were one hundred and sixteen judges. Thus God ordered it, that the confusion of the enemies, and the apostles' testimony against them, might be more public, and that those might hear the gospel who would not hear it otherwise than from the bar. Howbeit, the high priest meant not so, neither did his heart think so; but it was in his heart to rally all his forces against the apostles, and by a universal consent to cut them all off at once.

2. How they were disappointed, and had their faces filled with shame: *He that sits in heaven laughs at them*, and so may we too, to see how gravely the court is set; and we may suppose the high priest makes a solemn speech to them, setting forth the occasion of their coming together—that a very dangerous faction was now lately raised at Jerusalem, by the preaching of the doctrine of Jesus, which it was needful, for the preservation of their church (which never was in such danger as now), speedily and effectually to suppress—that it was now in the power of their hands to do it, for he had the ringleaders of the faction now in the common prison, to be proceeded against, if they would but agree to it, with the utmost severity. An officer

is, in order hereunto, despatched immediately to fetch the prisoners to the bar. But see how they are baffled. (1.) The officers come, and tell them that they are not to be found in the prison, v. 22, 23. The last time they were forthcoming when they were called for, ch. iv. 7. But now they were gone, and the report which the officers make is, "*The prison-doors truly found we shut with all safety*" (nothing had been done to weaken them); "*the keepers had not been wanting to their duty*"; we found them *standing without before the doors*, and knowing nothing to the contrary, but that the prisoners were all safe—but when we went in we found no man therein, that is, none of the men we were sent to fetch." It is probable that they found the common prisoners there. Which way the angel fetched them, whether by some back way, or opening the door and fastening it closely again (the keepers all the while asleep), we are not told; however it was, they were gone. The Lord knows, though we do not, how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to loose those that are in bonds for his name's sake, and he will do it, as here, when he has occasion for them. Now think how confused the court looked, when the officers made this return upon their order (v. 24): *When the high priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests, heard these things*, they were all at a plunge, and looked one upon another, *doubting what this thing should be*. They were extremely perplexed, were at their wits' end, having never been so disappointed in all their lives of any thing they were so sure of. It occasioned various speculations, some suggesting that they were conjured out of the prison, and made their escape by magic arts; others that the keepers had played tricks with them, knowing how many friends these prisoners had, that were so much the darlings of the people. Some feared that, having made such a wonderful escape, they would be the more followed; others that, though perhaps they had frightened them from Jerusalem, they should hear of them again in some part or other of the country, where they would do yet more mischief, and it would be yet more out of their power to stop the spreading of the infection; and now they begin to fear that instead of curing the ill they have made it worse. Note, Those often distress and embarrass themselves that think to distress and embarrass the cause of Christ. (2.) Their doubt is, in part, determined; and yet their vexation is increased by another messenger, who brings them word that their prisoners are preaching in the temple (v. 25): "*Behold, the men whom you put in prison*, and have sent for to your bar, are now hard by you here, *standing in the temple*, under your nose and in defiance of you, *teaching the people*." Prisoners, that have broken prison, usually abscond, for fear of being retaken; but these prisoners, that



here made their escape, dare to show their faces even where their persecutors have the greatest influence. Now this confounded them more than any thing. Common malefactors may have art enough to break prison; but those are uncommon ones that have courage enough to avow it when they have so done.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them, 28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. 29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. 33 When they heard *that*, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. 34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; 35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38 And now I say unto you, Refrain

from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: 39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. 40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

We are not told what it was that the apostles preached to the people; no doubt it was according to the direction of the angel—the words of this life; but what passed between them and the council we have here an account of; for in their sufferings there appeared more of a divine power and energy than even in their preaching. Now here we have,

I. The seizing of the apostles a second time. We may think, if God designed this, “Why were they rescued from their first imprisonment?” But this was designed to humble the pride, and check the fury, of their persecutors; and now he would show that they were discharged, not because they feared a trial, for they were ready to surrender themselves and make their appearance before the greatest of their enemies. 1. They brought them without violence, with all the respect and tenderness that could be: did not pull them out of the pulpit, nor bind them, nor drag them along, but accosted them respectfully; and one would think they had reason to do so, in reverence to the temple, that holy place, and for fear of the apostles, lest they should strike them, as they did Ananias, or call for fire from heaven upon them, as Elias did; but all that restrained their violence was their fear of the people who had such a veneration for the apostles that they would have stoned the officers if they had offered them any abuse. 2. Yet they brought them to those who, they knew, were violent against them, and were resolved to take violent courses with them (v. 27) They brought *them*, to set them before the council, as delinquents. Thus the powers that should have been a terror to evil works and workers became so to the good.

II. Their examination. Being brought before this august assembly, the high priest, as the mouth of the court, told them what it was they had to lay to their charge, v. 28. 1. That they had disobeyed the commands of authority, and would not submit to the in-



junctions and prohibitions given them (v. 28), "*Did not we*, by virtue of our authority, strictly charge and command you, upon pain of our highest displeasure, *that you should not teach in this name?* But you have disobeyed our commands, and gone on to preach not only without our licence, but against our express order." Thus those who make void the commandments of God are commonly very strict in binding on their own commandments, and insisting upon their own power: *Did not we command you?* Yes, they did; but did not Peter at the same time tell them that God's authority was superior to theirs, and his commands must take place of theirs? And they had forgotten this. 2. That they had spread false doctrine among the people, or at least a singular doctrine, which was not allowed by the Jewish church, nor agreed with what was delivered from Moses's chair. "*You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine*, and thereby have disturbed the public peace, and drawn people from the public establishment." Some take this for a haughty scornful word: "This silly senseless doctrine of yours, that is not worth taking notice of, you have made such a noise with, that even Jerusalem, the great and holy city, is become full of it, and it is all the talk of the town." They are angry that men, whom they look upon as despicable, should make themselves thus considerable. 3. That they had a malicious design against the government, and aimed to stir up the people against it, by representing it as wicked and tyrannical, and as having made itself justly odious both to God and man: "*You intend to bring this man's blood*, the guilt of it before God, the shame of it before men, *upon us.*" Thus they charge them not only with contumacy and contempt of the court, but with sedition and faction, and a plot both to set the people against them, for having persecuted even to death not only so innocent but so good and great a man as this Jesus, and also the Romans, for having drawn them into it. See here how those who with a great deal of presumption will do an evil thing yet cannot bear to hear of it afterwards, nor to have it charged upon them. When they were in the heat of the persecution they could cry daringly enough, "*His blood be upon us and upon our children*; let us bear the blame for ever." But now that they have time for a cooler thought they take it as a great affront to have his blood laid at their door. Thus are they convicted and condemned by their own consciences, and dread lying under that guilt in which they were not afraid to involve themselves.

III. Their answer to the charge exhibited against them: *Peter and the other apostles* all spoke to the same purport; whether severally examined, or answering jointly, they spoke as one and the same Spirit gave them utterance, depending upon the promise their Master had made them, that, when they

were brought before councils, it should be *given them in that same hour what they should speak*, and courage to speak it.

1. They justified themselves in their disobedience to the commands of the great sanhedrim, great as it was (v. 29): *We ought to obey God rather than men.* They do not plead the power they had to work miracles (this spoke sufficiently for them, and therefore they humbly decline mentioning it themselves), but they appeal to a maxim universally owned, which even natural conscience subscribes to, and which comes home to their case. God had commanded them to teach in the name of Christ, and therefore they ought to do it, though the chief priests forbade them. Note, Those rulers set up in opposition to God, and have a great deal to answer for, who punish men for disobedience to them in that which is their duty to God.

2. They justified themselves in doing what they could to fill Jerusalem with the doctrine of Christ, though, in preaching him up, they did indeed reflect upon those that maliciously ran him down, and if they thereby bring his blood upon them they may thank themselves. It is charged upon them as a crime that they preached Christ and his gospel. "Now," say they, "we will tell you who this Christ is, and what his gospel is, and then do you judge whether we ought not to preach it; nay, and we shall take this opportunity to preach it to you, *whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear.*"

(1.) The chief priests are told to their faces the indignities they did to this Jesus: "*You slew him and hanged him on a tree*, you cannot deny it." The apostles, instead of making an excuse, or begging their pardon, for bringing the guilt of this man's blood upon them, repeat the charge, and stand to it: "It was you that slew him; it was your act and deed." Note, People's being unwilling to hear of their faults is no good reason why they should not be faithfully told of them. It is a common excuse made for not reproving sin that the times will not bear it. But those whose office it is to reprove must not be awed by this; the times must bear it, and shall bear it. *Cry aloud and spare not*; cry aloud and fear not.

(2.) They are told also what honours God put upon this Jesus, and then let them judge who was in the right, the persecutors of his doctrine or the preachers of it. He calls God the *God of our fathers*, not only *ours*, but *yours*, to show that in preaching Christ they did not preach a new god, nor entice people to come and worship other gods; nor did they set up an institution contrary to that of Moses and the prophets, but they adhered to the God of the Jewish fathers; and that name of Christ which they preached answered the promises made to the fathers, and the covenant God entered into with them, and the types and figures of the law he gave

them. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; see what honour he did him. [1.] He raised him up; he qualified him for, and called him to, his great undertaking. It seems to refer to the promise God made by Moses, *A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you.* God raised him up out of obscurity, and made him great. Or, it may be meant of his raising him up from the grave: "You put him to death, but God has restored him to life, so that God and you are manifestly contesting about this Jesus; and which must we side with?" [2.] He exalted him with his right hand, ὡς ἡσασ—*hath lifted him up.* "You loaded him with disgrace, but God has crowned him with honour; and ought we not to honour him whom God honours?" God has exalted him, *τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ—with his right hand*, that is, by his power put forth; Christ is said to *live by the power of God.* Or, to his right hand, to sit there, to rest there, to rule there. "He has invested him with the highest dignity, and entrusted him with the highest authority, and therefore we must teach in his name, for God has given him a name above every name." [3.] "He has appointed him to be a prince and a Saviour, and therefore we ought to preach in his name, and to publish the laws of his government as he is a prince, and the offers of his grace as he is a Saviour." Observe, There is no having Christ to be our Saviour, unless we be willing to take him for our prince. We cannot expect to be redeemed and healed by him, unless we give up ourselves to be ruled by him. The judges of old were saviours. Christ's ruling is in order to his saving, and faith takes an entire Christ, that came, not to save us in our sins, but to save us from our sins. [4.] He is appointed, as a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. Therefore they must preach in his name to the people of Israel, for his favours were designed primarily and principally for them; and none that truly loved their country could be against this. Why should the rulers and elders of Israel oppose one who came with no less a blessing to Israel than repentance and pardon? Had he been exalted to give deliverance to Israel from the Roman yoke, and dominion over the neighbouring nations, the chief priests would have welcomed him with all their hearts. But repentance and remission of sins are blessings they neither value nor see their need of, and therefore they can by no means admit his doctrine. Observe here, *First*, Repentance and remission go together; wherever repentance is wrought, remission is without fail granted, and the favour is given to all those to whom is given the qualification for it. On the other hand, no remission without repentance; none are freed from the guilt and punishment of sin but those that are freed from the power and dominion of sin, that are turned from it

and turned against it. *Secondly*, It is Jesus Christ that gives, and is authorized to give, both repentance and remission. Whatsoever is required in the gospel-covenant is promised. Are we appointed to repent? Christ is appointed to give repentance, by his Spirit working with the word, to awaken the conscience, to work contrition for sin, and an effectual change in the heart and life. The new heart is his work, and the broken spirit a sacrifice of his providing; and, when he has given repentance, if he should not give remission he would *forsake the work of his own hands.* See how necessary it is that we repent, and that we apply ourselves to Christ by faith for his grace to work repentance in us. [5.] All this is well attested, *First*, by the apostles themselves; they are ready to testify upon oath, if required, that they saw him alive after his resurrection, and saw him ascend into heaven; and also that they experienced the power of his grace upon their hearts, raising them up to that which was far above their natural capacities: "*We are his witnesses*, appointed by him to publish this to the world; and if we should be silent, as you would have us, we should betray a trust, and be false to it." When a cause is trying, witnesses, of all men, ought not to be silenced, for the issue of the cause depends on their testimony. *Secondly*, By the Spirit of God: "We are witnesses, competent ones, and whose testimony is sufficient before any human judicature." But this is not all: *The Holy Ghost is witness*, a witness from heaven; for God hath given his gifts and graces to those that obey Christ. Therefore we must preach in this name, because for this end the Holy Ghost is given us, whose operations we cannot stifle. Note, The giving of the Holy Ghost to obedient believers, not only to bring them to the obedience of faith, but to make them eminently useful therein, is a very strong proof of the truth of Christianity. God gave the Holy Ghost by his Son and in his name (John xiv. 26), and in answer to his prayer (John xiv. 16), nay, it was Christ that sent him from the Father (John xv. 26; xvi. 7), and this proves the glory to which the Father has exalted him. The great work of the Spirit being not only to justify Christ (1 Tim. iii. 16), but to glorify him, and all his gifts having a direct tendency to exalt his name, prove that his doctrine is divine. else it would not be carried on thus by divine power. And, *Lastly*, The giving of the Holy Ghost to those that obey Christ, both for their assistance in their obedience and as a present recompence for their obedience, is a plain evidence that it is the will of God that Christ should be obeyed; "judge then whether we ought to obey you in opposition to him."

IV. The impression which the apostles' defence of themselves made upon the court. It was contrary to what one would have expected from men that pretended to reason,



learning, and sanctity. Surely such fair reasoning could not but clear the prisoners, and convert the judges. No, instead of yielding to it, they raged against it, and were filled, With indignation at what the apostles said: They were *cut to the heart*, angry to see their own sin set in order before them; stark mad to find that the gospel of Christ had so much to say for itself, and consequently was likely to get ground. When a sermon was preached to the people to this purport, they were *pricked to the heart*, in remorse and godly sorrow, *ch. ii. 37*. These here were *cut to the heart* with rage and indignation. Thus the same gospel is to some a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. The enemies of the gospel not only deprive themselves of its comforts, but fill themselves with terrors, and are their own tormentors. 2. With malice against the apostles themselves. Since they see they cannot stop their mouths any other way than by stopping their breath, they *take counsel to slay them*, hoping that so they shall *cause the work to cease*. While the apostles went on in the service of Christ, with a holy security and serenity of mind, perfectly composed, and in a sweet enjoyment of themselves, their persecutors went on in their opposition to Christ with a constant perplexity and perturbation of mind, and vexation to themselves.

V. The grave advice which Gamaliel, a leading man in the council, gave upon this occasion, the scope of which was to moderate the fury of these bigots, and check the violence of the prosecution. This Gamaliel is here said to be a *Pharisee* by his profession and sect, and by office a *doctor of the law*, one that studied the scriptures of the Old Testament, read lectures upon the sacred authors, and trained up pupils in the knowledge of them. Paul was brought up at his feet (*ch. xxii. 3*), and tradition says that so were Stephen and Barnabas. Some say he was the son of that Simeon that took up Christ in his arms, when he was presented in the temple, and grandson of the famous Hillel. He is here said to be *in reputation among all the people* for his wisdom and conduct, it appearing by this passage that he was a moderate man, and not apt to go in with furious measures. Men of temper and charity are justly had in reputation, for checking the incendiaries that otherwise would set the world on fire. Now observe here,

1. The necessary caution he gives to the council, with reference to the case before them: *He commanded to put the apostles forth a little while*, that he might speak the more freely, and be the more freely answered (it was fit that the prisoners should withdraw when their case was to be debated); and then put the house in mind of the importance of this matter, which in their heat they were not capable of considering as they ought: *You men of Israel*, saith he, *take heed to yourselves*, consider what you do, or *intend to do*,

*as touching these men*, *v. 35*. It is not a common case, and therefore should not be hastily determined. He calls them *men of Israel*, to enforce this caution: "You are men, that should be governed by reason, be not then as *the horse and the mule that have no understanding*; you are men of Israel, that should be governed by revelation, be not then as strangers and heathens, that have no regard to God and his word. *Take heed to yourselves* now that you are angry with these men, lest you *meddle to your own hurt*." Note, The persecutors of God's people had best look to themselves, lest they fall into the pit which they dig. We have need to be cautious whom we give trouble to, lest we be found making the hearts of the righteous sad.

2. The cases he cites, to pave the way to his opinion. Two instances he gives of factious seditious men (such as they would have the apostles thought to be), whose attempts came to nothing of themselves; whence he infers that if these men were indeed such as they represented them their cause would sink with its own weight, and Providence would infatuate and defeat them, and then they needed not persecute them.

(1.) There was one *Theudas*, that made a mighty noise for awhile, as one sent of God, *boasting himself to be somebody, some great one* (so the word is), either a teacher or a prince, with a divine commission to effect some great revolution in the church or in the state; and he observes here (*v. 36*) concerning him, [1.] How far he prevailed: "*A number of men, about four hundred* in all, joined themselves to him, that knew not what to do with themselves, or hoped to better themselves; and they seemed then a formidable body." [2.] How soon his pretensions were all dashed: "*When he was slain*" (probably in war) "*there needed no more ado, all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and melted away like snow before the sun*." Now compare that case with this. You have slain Jesus, the ringleader of this faction; you have taken him off. Now if he was, as you say he was, an impostor and pretender, his death, like that of Theudas, will be the death of his cause, and the final dispersion of his followers." From what has been we may infer what will be in a like case; the smiting of the shepherd will be the scattering of the sheep: and, if the God of peace had not brought again from the dead that great Shepherd, the dispersion of the sheep, at his death, had been total and final.

(2.) The case was the same with Judas of Galilee, *v. 37*. Observe, [1.] The attempt he made. It is said to be *after this*, which some read, *besides this*, or, Let me mention, *after this*,—supposing that Judas's insurrection was long before that of Theudas; for it was in the time of the taxation, namely, that at our Saviour's birth (*Luke ii. 1*), and that of Theudas, whom Josephus speaks of, that mutinied, in the time of *Cuspius Fadus*; but



this was in the days of Claudius Cæsar, some years after Gamaliel spoke this, and therefore could not be the same. It is not easy to determine particularly when these events happened, nor whether this taxing was the same with that at our Saviour's birth or one of a later date. Some think this Judas of Galilee was the same with Judas Gaulonites, whom Josephus speaks of, others not. It is probable that they were cases which lately happened, and were fresh in memory. This *Judas drew away much people after him*, who gave credit to his pretensions. But, [2.] Here is the defeat of his attempt, and that without any interposal of the great sanhedrim, or any decree of theirs against him (it did not need it); *he also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him*, or were persuaded by him, were dispersed. Many have foolishly thrown away their lives, and brought others into the same snares, by a jealousy for their liberties, *in the days of the taxing*, who had better have been content, when Providence had so determined, *to serve the king of Babylon*.

### 3. His opinion upon the whole matter.

(1.) That they should not persecute the apostles (v. 38): *Now I say unto you, τὰ νῦν—for the present*, as the matter now stands, my advice is, "*Refrain from these men; neither punish them for what they have done nor restrain them for the future. Connive at them; let them take their course; let not our hand be upon them.*" It is uncertain whether he spoke this out of policy, for fear of offending either the people or the Romans and making further mischief. The apostles did not attempt any thing by outward force. The weapons of their warfare were not carnal; and therefore why should any outward force be used against them? Or, whether he was under any present convictions, at least of the probability of the truth of the Christian doctrine, and thought it deserved better treatment, at least a fair trial. Or, whether it was only the language of a mild quiet spirit, that was against persecution for conscience' sake. Or, whether God put this word into his mouth beyond his own intention, for the deliverance of the apostles at this time. We are sure there was an overruling Providence in it, that the servants of Christ might not only come off, but come off honourably.

(2.) That they should refer this matter to Providence: "Wait the issue, and see what it will come to. *If it be of men, it will come to nought of itself; if of God, it will stand*, in spite of all your powers and policies." That which is apparently wicked and immoral must be suppressed, else the magistrate bears the sword in vain; but that which has a show of good, and it is doubtful whether it be of God or men, it is best to let it alone, and let it take its fate, not to use any external force for the suppressing of it. Christ rules by the power of truth, not of the sword. What

Christ asked concerning John's baptism, *Was it from heaven or of men?* was a question proper to be asked concerning the apostles' doctrine and baptism, which followed Christ, as John Baptist's went before him. Now they, having owned, concerning the former, that they could not tell whether it was from heaven or of men, ought not to be too confident concerning the latter. But, take it which way you will, it is a reason why they should not be persecuted. [1.] "*If this counsel, and this work, this forming of a society, and incorporating it in the name of Jesus, be of men, it will come to nothing.* If it be the counsel and work of foolish crack-brained men that know not what they do, let them alone awhile, and they will run themselves out of breath, and *their folly will be manifest before all men*, and they will make themselves ridiculous. If it be the counsel and work of politic and designing men, who under colour of religion are setting up a secular interest, let them alone awhile, and they will throw off the mask, and their knavery will be manifest to all men, and they will make themselves odious; Providence will never countenance it. *It will come to nothing* in a little time; and, if so, your persecuting and opposing it is very needless; there is no occasion for giving yourselves so much trouble, and bringing such an odium upon yourselves, to kill that which, if you give it a little time, will die of itself. The unnecessary use of power is an abuse of it. But," [2.] "*If it should prove (and as wise men as you have been mistaken) that this counsel and this work is of God*, that these preachers have their commissions and instructions from him, that they are as truly his messengers to the world as the Old-Testament prophets were, then what do you think of persecuting them, of this attempt of yours (v. 33) *to slay them?* You must conclude it to be," *First*, "*A fruitless attempt against them: If it be of God, you cannot overthrow it; for there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord; he that sits in heaven laughs at you.*" It may be the comfort of all who are sincerely on God's side, who have a single eye to his will as their rule and his glory as their end, that whatsoever is of God cannot be overthrown totally and finally, though it may be very vigorously opposed; it may be run upon, but cannot be run down. *Secondly*, "*A dangerous attempt to yourselves. Pray let it alone, lest haply you be found even to fight against God; and I need not tell you who will come off by the worse in that contest.*" *Woe unto him that strives with his Maker*; for he will not only be overcome as an impotent enemy, but severely reckoned with as a rebel and traitor against his rightful prince. Those that hate and abuse God's faithful people, that restrain and silence his faithful ministers, fight against God, for he takes what is done against them as done against himself. *Whoso touches them, touches the apple of his eye.* Well, this was



the advice of Gamaliel: we wish it were duly considered by those that persecute for conscience' sake, for it was a good thought, and natural enough, though we are uncertain what the man was. The tradition of the Jewish writers is that, for all this, he lived and died an inveterate enemy to Christ and his gospel; and though (now at least) he was not for persecuting the followers of Christ, yet he was the man who composed that prayer which the Jews use to this day for the extirpating of Christians and Christianity. On the contrary, the tradition of the Papists is that he turned Christian, and became an eminent patron of Christianity and a follower of Paul, who had formerly sat at his feet. If it had been so, it is very probable that we should have heard of him somewhere in the *Acts* or *Epistles*.

VI. The determination of the council upon the whole matter, v. 40. 1. Thus far they agreed with Gamaliel that they let fall the design of putting the apostles to death. They saw a great deal of reason in what Gamaliel said, and, for the present, it gave some check to their fury, and a remainder of their wrath was restrained by it. 2. Yet they could not forbear giving some vent to their rage (so outrageous was it) contrary to the convictions of their judgments and consciences; for, though they were advised to let them alone, yet, (1.) *They beat them*, scourged them as malefactors, stripped them, and whipped them, as they used to do in the synagogues, and notice is taken (v. 41) of the ignominy of it. Thus they thought to make them ashamed of preaching, and the people ashamed of hearing them; as Pilate scourged our Saviour to expose him, when yet he declared he found no fault in him. (2.) *They commanded them that they should not speak any more in the name of Jesus*, that, if they could find no other fault with their preaching, they might have this ground to reproach it, that it was against law, and not only without the permission, but against the express order of their superiors.

VII. The wonderful courage and constancy of the apostles in the midst of all these injuries and indignities done them. When they were dismissed *they departed from the council*, and we do not find one word they said by way of reflection upon the court and the unjust treatment given them. *When they were reviled they reviled not again; and when they suffered they threatened not; but committed their cause to him to whom Gamaliel had referred it, even to a God who judgeth righteously.* All their business was to preserve the possession of their own souls, and to make full proof of their ministry, notwithstanding the opposition given them; and both these they did to admiration.

1. They bore their sufferings with an invincible cheerfulness (v. 41): *When they went out*, perhaps with the marks of the lashes given them on their arms and hands

appearing, lusted at by the servants and rabble, it may be, or public notice given of the infamous punishment they had undergone, instead of being ashamed of Christ, and their relation to him, *they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.* They were men, and men in reputation, that had never done any thing to make themselves vile, and therefore could not but have a sense of the shame they suffered, which, it should seem, was more grievous to them than the smart, as it usually is to ingenious minds; but they considered that it was for the name of Christ that they were thus abused, because they belonged to him and served his interest, and their sufferings should be made to contribute to the further advancement of his name; and therefore, (1.) They reckoned it an honour, looked upon it *that they were counted worthy to suffer shame*, *καρηνώθησαν ἀτιμασθῆναι*—*that they were honoured to be dishonoured for Christ.* Reproach for Christ is true preferment, as it makes us conformable to his pattern and serviceable to his interest. (2.) They rejoiced in it, remembering what their Master had said to them at their first setting out (Matt. v. 11, 12): *When men shall revile you, and persecute you, rejoice and be exceedingly glad.* They rejoiced, not only though they suffered shame (their troubles did not diminish their joy), but *that they suffered shame*; their troubles increased their joy, and added to it. If we suffer ill for doing well, provided we suffer it well, and as we should, we ought to rejoice in that grace which enables us so to do.

2. They went on in their work with indefatigable diligence (v. 42): They were punished for preaching, and were commanded *not to preach, and yet they ceased not to teach and preach*; they omitted no opportunity, nor abated any thing of their zeal or forwardness. Observe, (1.) When they preached—*daily*; not only on sabbath days, or on Lord's days, but every day, as duly as the day came, without intermitting any day, as their Master did (Matt. xxvi. 55, Luke xix. 47), not fearing that they should either kill themselves or cloy their hearers. (2.) Where they preached—both publicly *in the temple*, and privately *in every house*; in promiscuous assemblies, to which all resorted, and in the select assemblies of Christians for special ordinances. They did not think that either one would excuse them from the other, for the word must be *preached in season and out of season.* Though in the temple they were more exposed, and under the eye of their enemies, yet they did not confine themselves to their little oratories in their own houses, but ventured into the post of danger; and though they had the liberty of the temple, a consecrated place, yet they made no difficulty of preaching in houses, in every house, even the poorest cottage. They visited the families of those that were under their charge, and gave particular instructions to them ac-

cording as their case required, even to the children and servants. (3.) What was the subject matter of their preaching: *They preached Jesus Christ*; they preached concerning him; and this was not all, they preached him up, they proposed him to those who heard them, *to be their prince and Saviour*. They did not preach themselves, but Christ, as faithful friends to the bridegroom, making it their business to advance his interest. This was the preaching that gave most offence to the priests, who were willing they should preach any thing but Christ; but they would not alter their subject to please them. It ought to be the constant business of gospel ministers to preach Christ; *Christ, and him crucified; Christ, and him glorified*; nothing besides this but what is reducible to it.

## CHAP. VI.

In this chapter we have, 1. The discontent that was among the disciples about the distribution of the public charity, ver. 1. 11. The election and ordination of seven men, who should take care of that matter, and ease the apostles of the burden, ver. 2—6. III. The increase of the church, by the addition of many to it, ver. 7. IV. A particular account of Stephen, one of the seven, 1. His great activity for Christ, ver. 8. 2. The opposition he met with from the enemies of Christianity, and his disputes with them, ver. 9, 10. 3. The convening of him before the great sanhedrim, and the crimes laid to his charge, ver. 11—14. 4. God's owning him upon his trial, ver. 15.

AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Having seen the church's struggles with her enemies, and triumphed with her in her

victories, we now come to take a view of the administration of her affairs at home; and here we have,

1. An unhappy disagreement among some of the church-members, which might have been of ill consequence, but was prudently accommodated and taken up in time (v. 1): *When the number of the disciples* (for so Christians were at first called, learners of Christ) *was multiplied* to many thousands in Jerusalem, *there arose a murmuring*.

1. It does our hearts good to find *that the number of the disciples is multiplied*, as, no doubt, it vexed the priests and Sadducees to the heart to see it. The opposition that the preaching of the gospel met with, instead of checking its progress, contributed to the success of it; and this infant Christian church, like the infant Jewish church in Egypt, *the more it was afflicted, the more it multiplied*. The preachers were beaten, threatened, and abused, and yet the people received their doctrine, invited, no doubt, thereto by their wonderful patience and cheerfulness under their trials, which convinced men that they were borne up and carried on by a better spirit than their own.

2. Yet it casts a damp upon us to find that the multiplying of the disciples proves an occasion of discord. Hitherto *they were all with one accord*. This had been often taken notice of to their honour; but now that they were multiplied they began to murmur; as in the old world, *when men began to multiply, they corrupted themselves*. *Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased their joy*, Isa. ix. 3. When Abraham and Lot increased their families, *there was a strife between their herdsmen*; so it was here: *There arose a murmuring*, not an open falling out, but a secret heart-burning.

(1.) The complainants were *the Grecians*, or Hellenists, *against the Hebrews*—the Jews that were scattered in Greece, and other parts, who ordinarily spoke the Greek tongue, and read the Old Testament in the Greek version, and not the original Hebrew, many of whom being at Jerusalem at the feast embraced the faith of Christ, and were added to the church, and so continued there. These complained against the Hebrews, the native Jews, that used the original Hebrew of the Old Testament. Some of each of these became Christians, and, it seems, their joint-embracing of the faith of Christ did not prevail, as it ought to have done, to extinguish the little jealousies they had one of another before their conversion, but they retained somewhat of that old leaven; not understanding, or not remembering, *that in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew*, no distinction of Hebrew and Hellenist, but all are alike welcome to Christ, and should be, for his sake, dear to one another.

(2.) The complaint of these Grecians was *that their widows were neglected in the daily administration*, that is, in the distribution of



the public charity, and the Hebrew widows had more care taken of them. Observe, The first contention in the Christian church was about a money-matter; but it is a pity *that the little things of this world* should be make-bates among those that profess to be taken up with *the great things of another world*. A great deal of money was gathered for the relief of the poor, but, as often happens in such cases, it was impossible to please every body in the laying of it out. *The apostles, at whose feet it was laid*, did their best to dispose of it; so as to answer the intentions of the donors, and no doubt designed to do it with the utmost impartiality, and were far from respecting the Hebrews more than the Grecians; and yet here they are complained to, and tacitly complained of, *that the Grecian widows were neglected*; though they were as real objects of charity, yet they had not so much allowed them, or not to so many, or not so duly paid them, as the Hebrews. Now, [1.] Perhaps this complaint was groundless and unjust, and there was no cause for it; but those who, upon any account, lie under disadvantages (as the Grecian Jews did, in comparison with those that were Hebrews of the Hebrews) are apt to be jealous that they are slighted when really they are not so; and it is the common fault of poor people that, instead of being thankful for what is given them, they are querulous and clamorous, and apt to find fault that more is not given them, or that more is given to others than to them; and there are envy and covetousness, those roots of bitterness, to be found among the poor as well as among the rich, notwithstanding the humbling providences they are under, and should accommodate themselves to. But, [2.] We will suppose there might be some occasion for their complaint. First, Some suggest that though their other poor were well provided for, yet their widows were neglected, because the managers governed themselves by an ancient rule which the Hebrews observed, *that a widow was to be maintained by her husband's children*. See 1 Tim. v. 4. But, Secondly, I take it that the widows are here put for all the poor, because many of those that were in the church-book, and received alms, were widows, who were well provided for by the industry of their husbands while they lived, but were reduced to straits when they were gone. As those that have the administration of public justice ought in a particular manner to protect widows from injury (Isa. i. 17; Luke xviii. 3); so those that have the administration of public charity ought in a particular manner to provide for widows what is necessary. See 1 Tim. v. 3. And observe, The widows here, and the other poor, had a daily ministration; perhaps they wanted forecast, and could not save for hereafter, and therefore the managers of the fund, in kindness to them, gave them day by day their daily bread; they lived from hand to

mouth. Now, it seems, the Grecian widows were, comparatively, neglected. Perhaps those that disposed of the money considered that there was more brought into the fund by the rich Hebrews than by the rich Grecians, who had not estates to sell, as the Hebrews had, and therefore the poor Grecians should have less out of the fund; this, though there was some tolerable reason for it, they thought hard and unfair. Note, In the best-ordered church in the world there will be something amiss, some mal-administration or other, some grievances, or at least some complaints; those are the best that have the least and the fewest.

II. The happy accommodating of this matter, and the expedient pitched upon for the taking away of the cause of this murmuring. The apostles had hitherto the directing of the matter. Applications were made to them, and appeals in cases of grievances. They were obliged to employ persons under them, who did not take all the care they might have taken, nor were so well fortified as they should have been against temptations to partiality; and therefore some persons must be chosen to manage this matter who have more leisure to attend to it than the apostles had, and were better qualified for the trust than those whom the apostles employed were. Now observe,

1. How the method was proposed by the apostles: They called the multitude of the disciples unto them, the heads of the congregations of Christians in Jerusalem, the principal leading men. The twelve themselves would not determine any thing without them, *for in multitude of counsellors there is safety*; and in an affair of this nature those might be best able to advise who were more conversant in the affairs of this life than the apostles were.

(1.) The apostles urge that they could by no means admit so great a diversion, as this would be, from their great work (v. 2): *It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables*. The receiving and paying of money was serving tables, too like the tables of the money-changers in the temple. This was foreign to the business which the apostles were called to. They were to *preach the word of God*; and though they had not such occasion to study for what they preached as we have (it being given in that same hour what they should speak), yet they thought that was work enough for a whole man, and to employ all their thoughts, and cares, and time, though one man of them was more than ten of us, *than ten thousand*. If they serve tables, they must, in some measure, leave the word of God; they could not attend their preaching work so closely as they ought. *Pectora nostra duas non admittentia curas—These minds of ours admit not of two distinct anxious employments*. Though this serving of tables was for pious uses, and serving the charity of rich Christians and the necessity of



poor Christians, and in both serving Christ, yet the apostles would not take so much time from their preaching as this would require. They will no more be drawn from their preaching by the money laid at their feet than they will be driven from it by the stripes laid on their backs. While the number of the disciples was small, the apostles might manage this matter without making it any considerable interruption to their main business; but, now that their number was increased, they could not do it. *It is not reason, οὐκ ἀρεσὸν ἐστίν—it is not fit, or commendable, that we should neglect the business of feeding souls with the bread of life, to attend the business of relieving the bodies of the poor.* Note, Preaching the gospel is the best work, and the most proper and needful that a minister can be employed in, and that which he must give himself wholly to (1 Tim. iv. 15), which that he may do, he must not entangle himself in the affairs of this life (2 Tim. ii. 4), no, not in the outward business of the house of God, Neh. xi. 16.

(2.) They therefore desire that seven men might be chosen, well qualified for the purpose, whose business it should be to *serve tables, διακονεῖν τραπέζαις—to be deacons to the tables, v. 2.* The business must be minded, must be better minded than it had been, and than the apostles could mind it; and therefore proper persons must be chosen, who, though they might be occasionally employed in the word, and prayer, were not so entirely devoted to it as the apostles were; and these must take care of the church's stock—must review, and pay, and keep accounts—must *buy those things which they had need of against the feast* (John xiii. 29), and attend to all those things which are necessary in *ordine ad spiritualia—in order to spiritual exercises*, that every thing might be done decently and in order, and no person nor thing neglected. Now,

[1.] The persons must be duly qualified. The people are to choose, and the apostles to ordain; but the people have no authority to choose, nor the apostles to ordain, men utterly unfit for the office: *Look out seven men*; so many they thought might suffice for the present, more might be added afterwards if there were occasion. These must be, *First, Of honest report*, men free from scandal, that were looked upon by their neighbours as men of integrity, and faithful men, well attested, as men that might be trusted, not under a blemish for any vice, but, on the contrary, well spoken of for every thing that is virtuous and praiseworthy; *μαρτυροῦμένους—men that can produce good testimonials concerning their conversation.* Note, Those that are employed in any office in the church ought to be men of honest report, of a blameless, nay, of an admirable character, which is requisite not only to the credit of their office, but to the due discharge of it. *Secondly,* They must be *full of the Holy Ghost*, must

be filled with those gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost which were necessary to the right management of this trust. They must not only be honest men, but they must be men of ability and men of courage; such as were to be made judges in Israel (Exod. xviii. 21), *able men, fearing God; men of truth, and hating covetousness*; and hereby appearing to be *full of the Holy Ghost.* *Thirdly,* They must be *full of wisdom.* It was not enough that they were honest, good men, but they must be discreet, judicious men, that could not be imposed upon, and would order things for the best, and with consideration: *full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom*, that is, of the Holy Ghost as a Spirit of wisdom. We find the word of wisdom given by the Spirit, as distinct from the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 8. Those must be full of wisdom who are entrusted with public money, that it may be disposed of, not only with fidelity, but with frugality.

[2.] The people must nominate the persons: *“Look you out among yourselves seven men*; consider among yourselves who are the fittest for such a trust, and whom you can with the most satisfaction confide in.” They might be presumed to know better, or at least were fitter to enquire, what character men had, than the apostles; and therefore they are entrusted with the choice.

[3.] The apostles will ordain them to the service, will give them their charge, that they may know what they have to do and make conscience of doing it, and give them their authority, that the persons concerned may know whom they are to apply to, and submit to, in affairs of that nature: *Men, whom we may appoint.* In many editions of our English Bibles there has been an error of the press here; for they have read it, *whom ye may appoint*, as if the power were in the people; whereas it was certainly in the apostles: *whom we may appoint over this business*, to take care of it, and to see that there be neither waste nor want.

(3.) The apostles engage to addict themselves wholly to their work as ministers, and the more closely if they can but get fairly quit of this troublesome office (v. 4): *We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.* See here, [1.] What are the two great gospel ordinances—the word, and prayer; by these two communion between God and his people is kept up and maintained; by the word he speaks to them, and by prayer they speak to him; and these have a mutual reference to each other. By these two the kingdom of Christ must be advanced, and additions made to it: *we must prophesy upon the dry bones, and then pray for a spirit of life from God to enter into them.* By the word and prayer other ordinances are sanctified to us, and sacraments have their efficacy. [2.] What is the great business of gospel ministers—to give themselves continually to prayer, and to



the ministry of the word; they must still be either fitting and furnishing themselves for those services, or employing themselves in them; either publicly or privately; in the stated times, or out of them. They must be God's mouth to the people in the ministry of the word, and the people's mouth to God in prayer. In order to the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the edification and consolation of saints, we must not only offer up our prayers for them, but we must minister the word to them, seconding our prayers with our endeavours, in the use of appointed means. Nor must we only minister the word to them, but we must pray for them, that it may be effectual; for God's grace can do all without our preaching, but our preaching can do nothing without God's grace. The apostles were endued with extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, tongues and miracles; and yet that to which they gave themselves continually was preaching and praying, by which they might edify the church: and those ministers, without doubt, are the successors of the apostles (not in the plenitude of the apostolical power—those are daring usurpers who pretend to this, but in the best and most excellent of the apostolical works) who give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word; and such Christ will always be with, *even to the end of the world.*

2. How this proposal was agreed to, and presently put in execution, by the disciples. It was not imposed upon them by an absolute power, though they might have been bold in Christ to do this (Philem. 8), but proposed, as that which was highly convenient, and then the saying pleased the whole multitude, v. 5. It pleased them to see the apostles so willing to have themselves discharged from intermeddling in secular affairs, and to transmit them to others; it pleased them to hear that they would give themselves to the word and prayer; and therefore they neither disputed the matter nor deferred the execution of it.

(1.) They pitched upon the persons. It is not probable that they all cast their eye upon the same men. Every one had his friend, whom he thought well of. But the majority of votes fell upon the persons here named; and the rest both of the candidates and the electors acquiesced, and made no disturbance, as the members of societies in such cases ought to do. An apostle, who was an extraordinary officer, was chosen by lot, which is more immediately the act of God; but the overseers of the poor were chosen by the suffrage of the people, in which yet a regard is to be had to the providence of God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand. We have a list of the persons chosen. Some think they were such as were before of the seventy disciples; but this is not likely, for they were ordained by Christ himself, long since, *to preach the gospel*; and there was no

more reason that they should leave the word of God to serve tables than that the apostles should. It is therefore more probable that they were of those that were converted since the pouring out of the Spirit; for it was promised to all that would be baptized that they should *receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*; and the gift, according to that promise, is that fulness of the Holy Ghost which was required in those that were to be chosen to this service. We may further conjecture, concerning these seven, [1.] That they were such as had sold their estates, and brought the money into the common stock; for, *cæteris paribus—other things being equal*, those were fittest to be entrusted with the distribution of it who had been most generous in the contribution to it. [2.] That these seven were all of the Grecian or Hellenist Jews, for they have all Greek names, and this would be most likely to silence the murmurings of the Grecians (which occasioned this institution), to have the trust lodged in those that were foreigners, like themselves, who would be sure not to neglect them. *Nicolas*, it is plain, was one of them, for he was a *proselyte of Antioch*; and some think the manner of expression intimates that they were all proselytes of Jerusalem, as he was of Antioch. The first named is *Stephen*, the glory of these *septemviri*, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; he had a strong faith in the doctrine of Christ, and was full of it above most; full of fidelity, full of courage (so some), for he was full of the Holy Ghost, of his gifts and graces. He was an extraordinary man, and excelled in every thing that was good; his name signifies a crown. *Philip* is put next, because he, having used this office of a deacon well, thereby obtained a good degree, and was afterwards ordained to the office of an evangelist, a companion and assistant to the apostles, for so he is expressly called, ch. xxi. 8. Compare Eph. iv. 11. And his preaching and baptizing (which we read of ch. viii. 12) were certainly not as a deacon (for it is plain that that office was serving tables, in opposition to the ministry of the word), but as an evangelist; and, when he was preferred to that office, we have reason to think he quitted this office, as incompatible with that. As for *Stephen*, nothing we find done by him proves him to be a preacher of the gospel; for he only disputes in the schools, and pleads for his life at the bar, v. 9, and ch. vii. 2. The last named is *Nicolas*, who, some say, afterwards degenerated (as the Judas among these seven) and was the founder of the sect of the *Nicolaitans* which we read of (Rev. ii. 6, 15), and which Christ there says, once and again, was a thing he hated. But some of the ancients clear him from this charge, and tell us that, though that vile impure sect denominated themselves from him, yet it was unjustly, and because he only insisted much upon it that those that had wives should be as though

they had none, thence they wickedly inferred that those that had wives should have them in common, which therefore Tertullian, when he speaks of the community of goods, particularly excepts: *Omnia indiscreta apud nos, præter uoces*—All things are common among us, except our wives.—Apol. cap. 39.

(2.) The apostles appointed them to this work of serving tables for the present, v. 6. The people presented them to the apostles, who approved their choice, and ordained them. [1.] They prayed with them, and for them, that God would give them more and more of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom—that he would qualify them for the service to which they were called, and own them in it, and make them thereby a blessing to the church, and particularly to the poor of the flock. All that are employed in the service of the church ought to be committed to the conduct of the divine grace by the prayers of the church. [2.] They laid their hands on them, that is, they blessed them in the name of the Lord, for laying on hands was used in blessing; so Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph; and, without controversy, the less is blessed of the greater (Heb. vii. 7); the deacons are blessed by the apostles, and the overseers of the poor by the pastors of the congregation. Having by prayer implored a blessing upon them, they did by the laying on of hands assure them that the blessing was conferred in answer to the prayer; and this was giving them authority to execute that office, and laying an obligation upon the people to be observant of them therein.

III. The advancement of the church hereupon. When things were thus put into good order in the church (grievances were redressed and discontents silenced) then religion got ground, v. 7. 1. *The word of God increased.* Now that the apostles resolved to stick more closely than ever to their preaching, it spread the gospel further, and brought it home with the more power. Ministers disentangling themselves from secular employments, and addicting themselves entirely and vigorously to their work, will contribute very much, as a means, to the success of the gospel. The word of God is said to increase as the seed sown increases when it comes up again thirty, sixty, a hundred fold. 2. Christians became numerous: *The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.* When Christ was upon earth, his ministry had least success in Jerusalem; yet now that city affords most converts. God has his remnant even in the worst of places. 3. *A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.* Then is the word and grace of God greatly magnified when those are wrought upon by it that were least likely, as the priests here, who either had opposed it, or at least were linked in with those that had. The priests, whose preferments arose from the law of Moses, were yet willing to let them go for the gospel of Christ; and, it should seem,

they came in a body: many of them agreed together, for the keeping up of one another's credit, and the strengthening of one another's hands, to join at once in giving up their names to Christ: *πολλοὶ ὄχλος*—a great crowd of priests were by the grace of God helped over their prejudices, and were obedient to the faith, so their conversion is described. (1.) They embraced the doctrine of the gospel; their understandings were captivated to the power of the truths of Christ, and every opposing objecting thought brought into obedience to him, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. The gospel is said to be made known for the obedience of faith, Rom. xvi. 26. Faith is an act of obedience, for this is God's commandment, that we believe, 1 John iii. 23. (2.) They evinced the sincerity of their believing the gospel of Christ by a cheerful compliance with all the rules and precepts of the gospel. The design of the gospel is to refine and reform our hearts and lives; faith gives law to us, and we must be obedient to it.

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. 11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, 13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: 14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Stephen, no doubt was diligent and faithful in the discharge of his office as distributor of the church's charity, and laid out himself to put that affair in a good method, which he did to universal satisfaction; and though it appears here that he was a man of uncommon gifts, and fitted for a higher station, yet, being called to that office, he did not think



it below him to do the duty of it. And, being faithful in a little, he was entrusted with more; and, though we do not find him propagating the gospel by preaching and baptizing, yet we find him here called out to very honourable services, and owned in them.

I. He proved the truth of the gospel, by working miracles in Christ's name, v. 8. 1. He was *full of faith and power*, that is, of a strong faith, by which he was enabled to do great things. Those that are full of faith are full of power, because, by faith the power of God is engaged for us. His faith did so fill him that it left no room for unbelief and made room for the influences of divine grace, so that, as the prophet speaks; he was *full of power by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, Mic. iii. 8. By faith we are emptied of self, and so are filled with Christ, who is the *wisdom of God and the power of God*. 2. Being so he *did great wonders and miracles among the people*, openly, and in the sight of all; for Christ's miracles feared not the strictest scrutiny. It is not strange that Stephen, though he was not a preacher by office, did these great wonders, for we find that these were distinct gifts of the Spirit, and divided severally, for to one was given the *working of miracles*, and to another *prophecy*, 1 Cor. xii. 10, 11. And *these signs followed* not only those that preached, but those that believed. Mark xvi. 17.

II. He pleaded the cause of Christianity against those that opposed it, and argued against it (v. 9, 10); he served the interests of religion as a disputant, in the high places of the field, while others were serving them as vinedressers and husbandmen.

1. We are here told who were his opponents, v. 9. They were Jews, but Hellenist Jews, Jews of the dispersion, who seem to have been more zealous for their religion than the native Jews; it was with difficulty that they retained the practice and profession of it in the country where they lived, where they were as speckled birds, and not without great expense and toil that they kept up their attendance at Jerusalem, and this made them more active sticklers for Judaism than those were whose profession of their religion was cheap and easy. They were of the *synagogue which is called the synagogue of the Libertines*; the Romans called those *Liberti*, or *Libertini*, who either, being foreigners, were naturalized, or, being slaves by birth, were manumitted, or made freemen. Some think that these Libertines were such of the Jews as had obtained the Roman freedom, as Paul had (ch. xxii. 27, 28); and it is probable that he was the most forward man of this synagogue of the Libertines in disputing with Stephen, and engaged others in the dispute, for we find him busy in the stoning of Stephen, and consenting to his death. There were others that belonged to the synagogue of the Cyrenians and Alexandrians, of which synagogue the Jewish writers speak; and others

that belonged to their synagogue who were of Cilicia and Asia; and if Paul, as a freeman of Rome, did not belong to the synagogue of the Libertines, he belonged to this, as a native of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia: it is probable that he might be a member of both. The Jews that were born in other countries, and had concerns in them, had frequent occasion, not only to resort to, but to reside in, Jerusalem. Each nation had its synagogue, as in London there are French, and Dutch, and Danish churches: and those synagogues were the schools to which the Jews of those nations sent their youth to be educated in the Jewish learning. Now those that were tutors and professors in these synagogues, seeing the gospel grow, and the rulers conniving at the growth of it, and fearing what would be the consequence of it to the Jewish religion, which they were jealous for, being confident of the goodness of their cause, and their own sufficiency to manage it, would undertake to run down Christianity by force of argument. It was a fair and rational way of dealing with it, and what religion is always ready to admit. *Produce your cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong reasons*, Isa. xli. 21. But why did they dispute with Stephen? And why not with the apostles themselves? (1.) Some think because they despised the apostles as *unlearned and ignorant men*, whom they thought it below them to engage with; but Stephen was bred a scholar, and they thought it their honour to meddle with their match. (2.) Others think it was because they stood in awe of the apostles, and could not be so free and familiar with them as they could be with Stephen, who was in an inferior office. (3.) Perhaps, they having given a public challenge, Stephen was chosen and appointed by the disciples to be their champion; for it was not meet that the apostles should leave the preaching of the word of God to engage in controversy. Stephen, who was only a deacon in the church, and a very sharp young man, of bright parts, and better qualified to deal with wrangling disputants than the apostles themselves, was appointed to this service. Some historians say that Stephen had been bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, and that Saul and the rest of them set upon him as a deserter, and with a particular fury made him their mark. (4.) It is probable that they disputed with Stephen because he was zealous to argue with them and convince them, and this was the service to which God had called him.

2. We are here told how he carried the point in this dispute (v. 10): *They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke*. They could neither support their own arguments nor answer his. He proved by such irresistible arguments that Jesus is the Christ, and delivered himself with so much clearness and fulness that they had nothing to object against what he said; though they were not convinced, yet they were confounded. It is not said, They were not able



to resist him, but, They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke, that Spirit of wisdom which spoke by him. Now was fulfilled that promise, *I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist*, Luke xxi. 15. They thought they had only disputed with Stephen, and could make their part good with him; but they were disputing with the Spirit of God in him, for whom they were an unequal match.

III. At length, he sealed it with his blood; so we shall find he did in the next chapter; here we have some steps taken by his enemies towards it. When they could not answer his arguments as a disputant, they prosecuted him as a criminal, and suborned witnesses against him, to swear blasphemy upon him. "On such terms (saith Mr. Baxter here) do we dispute with malignant men. And it is next to a miracle of providence that no greater number of religious persons have been murdered in the world, by the way of purjury and pretence of law, when so many thousands hate them who make no conscience of false oaths." They suborned men, that is, instructed them what to say, and then hired them to swear it. They were the more enraged against him because he had proved them to be in the wrong, and shown them the right way; for which they ought to have given him their best thanks. *Was he therefore become their enemy, because he told them the truth, and proved it to be so?* Now let us observe here,

1. How with all possible art and industry they incensed both the government and the mob against him, that, if they could not prevail by the one, they might by the other (v. 12): *They stirred up the people* against him, that, if the sanhedrim should still think fit (according to Gamaliel's advice) to let him alone, yet they might run him down by a popular rage and tumult; they also found means to stir up the elders and scribes against him, that, if the people should countenance and protect him, they might prevail by authority. Thus they doubted not but to gain their point, when they had two strings to their bow.

2. How they got him to the bar: *They came upon him*, when he little thought of it, and caught him and brought him to the council. They came upon him in a body, and flew upon him as a lion upon his prey; so the word signifies. By their rude and violent treatment of him, they would represent him, both to the people and to the government, as a dangerous man, that would either flee from justice if he were not watched, or fight with it if he were not put under a force. Having caught him, they brought him triumphantly into the council, and, as it should seem, so hastily that he had none of his friends with him. They had found, when they brought many together, that they emboldened one another, and strengthened one another's

hands; and therefore they will try how to deal with them singly.

3. How they were prepared with evidence ready to produce against him. They were resolved that they would not be run a-ground, as they were when they brought our Saviour upon his trial, and then had to seek for witnesses. These were got ready beforehand, and were instructed to make oath that they had heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God (v. 11)—against this holy place and the law (v. 13); for they heard him say what Jesus would do to their place and their customs, v. 14. It is probable that he had said something to that purport; and yet those who swore it against him are called *false witnesses*, because, though there was something of truth in their testimony, yet they put a wrong and malicious construction upon what he had said, and perverted it. Observe,

(1.) What was the general charge exhibited against him—that he *spoke blasphemous words*; and, to aggravate the matter, "He ceases not to speak blasphemous words; it is his common talk, his discourse in all companies; wheresoever he comes, he makes it his business to instil his notions into all he converses with." It intimates likewise something of contumacy and contempt of admonition. "He has been warned against it, and yet ceases not to talk at this rate." Blasphemy is justly reckoned a heinous crime (to speak contemptibly and reproachfully of God our Maker), and therefore Stephen's persecutors would be thought to have a deep concern upon them for the honour of God's name, and to do this in a jealousy for that. As it was with the confessors and martyrs of the Old Testament, so it was with those of the New—their brethren that hated them, and cast them out, said, *Let the Lord be glorified*; and pretended they did him service in it. He is said to have spoken blasphemous words against Moses and against God. Thus far they were right, that those who blaspheme Moses (if they meant the writings of Moses, which were given by inspiration of God) blaspheme God himself. Those that speak reproachfully of the scriptures, and ridicule them, reflect upon God himself, and do despite to him. His great intention is to magnify the law and make it honourable; those therefore that vilify the law, and make it contemptible, blaspheme his name; for he has magnified his word above all his name. But did Stephen blaspheme Moses? By no means, he was far from it. Christ, and the preachers of his gospel, never said any thing that looked like blaspheming Moses; they always quoted his writings with respect, appealed to them, and said no other things than what Moses said should come; very unjustly therefore is Stephen indicted for blaspheming Moses. But,

(2.) Let us see how this charge is supported and made out; why, truly, when the thing was to be proved, all they can charge



him with is that *that he hath spoken blasphemous words against this holy place and the law*; and this must be deemed and taken as blasphemy against Moses and against God himself. Thus does the charge dwindle when it comes to the evidence. [1.] He is charged with blaspheming *this holy place*. Some understand this of the city of Jerusalem, which was the holy city, and which they had a mighty jealousy for. But it is rather meant of the temple, that holy house. Christ was condemned as a blasphemer for words which were thought to reflect upon the temple, which they seemed concerned for the honour of, even when they by their wickedness had profaned it. [2.] He is charged with blaspheming *the law*, of which they made *their boast*, and in which they put their trust, when through *breaking the law they dishonoured God*, Rom. ii. 23. Well, but how can they make this out? Why, here the charge dwindles again; for all they can accuse him of is that *they had themselves heard him say* (but how it came in, or what explanation he gave of it, they think not themselves bound to give account) that this *Jesus of Nazareth*, who was so much talked of, *shall destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered to us*. He could not be charged with having said any thing to the disparagement either of the temple or of the law. The priests had themselves profaned the temple, by making it not only a house of merchandise, but a den of thieves; yet they would be thought zealous for the honour of it, against one that had never said any thing amiss of it, but had attended it more as a house of prayer, according to the true intention of it, than they had. Nor had he ever reproached the law as they had. But, *First*, He had said, *Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place*, destroy the temple, destroy Jerusalem. It is probable that he might say so; and what blasphemy was it against the holy place to say that it should not be perpetual any more than Shiloh was, and that the just and holy God would not continue the privileges of his sanctuary to those that abused them? Had not the prophets given the same warning to their fathers of the destruction of that holy place by the Chaldeans? Nay, when the temple was first built, had not God himself given the same warning: *This house, which is high, shall be an astonishment*, 2 Chron. vii. 21. And is he a blasphemer, then, who tells them that Jesus of Nazareth, if they continue their opposition to him, will bring a just destruction upon their place and nation, and they may thank themselves? Those wickedly abuse their profession of religion who, under colour of that, call the reproofs given them for their disagreeable conversations blasphemous reflections upon their religion. *Secondly*, He had said, *This Jesus shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us*. And it was expected that in the days of the

Messiah they should be changed, and that the shadows should be done away when the substance was come; yet this was no essential change of the law, but the perfecting of it. *Christ came, not to destroy*, but to fulfil, the law; and, if he changed some customs that Moses delivered, it was to introduce and establish those that were much better; and if the Jewish church had not obstinately refused to come into this new establishment, and adhered to the ceremonial law, for aught I know *their place* had not been destroyed; so that for putting them into a certain way to prevent their destruction, and for giving them certain notice of their destruction if they did not take that way, he is accused as a blasphemer.

IV. We are here told how God owned him when he was brought before the council, and made it to appear that he stood by him (v. 15): *All that sat in the council*, the priests, scribes, and elders, *looking stedfastly on him*, being a stranger, and one they had not yet had before them, *saw his face as it had been the face of an angel*. It is usual for judges to observe the countenance of the prisoner, which sometimes is an indication either of guilt or innocence. Now Stephen appeared at the bar with the countenance *as of an angel*. 1. Perhaps it intimates no more than that he had an extraordinarily pleasant, cheerful countenance, and there was not in it the least sign either of fear for himself or anger at his persecutors. He looked as if he had never been better pleased in his life than he was now when he was called out to bear his testimony to the gospel of Christ, thus publicly, and stood fair for the crown of martyrdom. Such an undisturbed serenity, such an undaunted courage, and such an unaccountable mixture of mildness and majesty, there was in his countenance, that every one said he looked like an angel; enough surely to convince the Sadducees that there are angels, when they saw before their eyes an incarnate angel. 2. It should rather seem that there was a miraculous splendour and brightness upon his countenance, like that of our Saviour when he was transfigured—or, at least, that of Moses when he came down from the mount—God designing thereby to put honour upon his faithful witness and confusion upon his persecutors and judges, whose sin would be highly aggravated, and would be indeed a rebellion against the light, if, notwithstanding this, they proceeded against him. Whether he himself knew that the skin of his face shone or no we are not told; but *all that sat in the council saw it*, and probably took notice of it to one another, and an arrant shame it was that when they saw, and could not but see by it that he was owned of God, they did not call him from standing at the bar to sit in the chief seat upon the bench. Wisdom and holiness make a man's face to shine, and yet these will not secure men

from the greatest indignities; and no wonder, when the shining of Stephen's face could not be his protection; though it had been easy to prove that if he had been guilty of putting any dishonour upon Moses God would not thus have put Moses's honour upon him.

## CHAP. VII.

When our Lord Jesus called his apostles out to be employed in services and sufferings for him, he told them that yet the last should be first, and the first last, which was remarkably fulfilled in St. Stephen and St. Paul, who were both of them late converts, in comparison of the apostles, and yet got the start of them both in services and sufferings; for God, in conferring honours and favours, often crosses hands. In this chapter we have the martyrdom of Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian church, who led the van in that noble army. And therefore his sufferings and death are more largely related than those of any other, for direction and encouragement to all those who are called out to resist unto blood, as he did. Here is, I. His defence of himself before the council, in answer to the matters and things he stood charged with, the scope of which is to show that it was no blasphemy against God, nor any injury at all to the glory of his name, to say that the temple should be destroyed and the customs of the ceremonial law changed. And, 1. He shows this by going over the history of the Old Testament, and observing that God never intended to confine his favours to that place, or that ceremonial law; and that they had no reason to expect he should, for the people of the Jews had always been a provoking people, and had forfeited the privileges of their peculiarity: nay, that that holy place and that law were but figures of good things to come, and it was no disparagement at all to them to say that they must give place to better things, ver. 1-50. And then, 2. He applies this to those that prosecuted him, and sat in judgment upon him, sharply reproving them for their wickedness, by which they had brought upon themselves the ruin of their place and nation, and then could not bear to hear of it, ver. 51-53. 11. The putting of him to death by stoning him, and his patient, cheerful, pious submission to it, ver. 54-60.

**T**HEN said the high priest, Are these things so? 2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charan, 3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charan: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. 5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. 6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage and entreat them evil four hundred years. 7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. 8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised

him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. 9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers 16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.

Stephen is now at the bar before the great council of the nation, indicted for blasphemy: what the witnesses swore against him we had an account of in the foregoing chapter, that he spoke blasphemous words against Moses and God; for he spoke against this holy place and the law. Now here,

I. The high priest calls upon him to answer for himself, v. 1. He was president, and, as such, the mouth of the court, and therefore he saith, "You, the prisoner at the bar, you hear what is sworn against you; what do you say to it? *Are these things so?* Have you ever spoken any words to this purport? If you have, will you recant them, or will you stand to them? *Guilty or not guilty?*" This carried a show of fairness, and yet seems to have been spoken with an air of haughtiness; and thus far he seems to have prejudged the cause, that, if it were so, that he had spoken such and such words, he shall certainly be adjudged a blasphemer, whatever he may offer in justification or explanation of them.

II. He begins his defence, and it is long; but it should seem by his breaking off abruptly, just when he came to the main point (v. 50), that it would have been much longer if his enemies would have given him leave to say all he had to say. In general we may observe,

1. That in this discourse he appears to be



a man ready and mighty in the scriptures, and thereby thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. He can relate scripture stories, and such as were very pertinent to his purpose, off-hand without looking in his Bible. He was *filled with the Holy Ghost*, not so much to reveal to him new things, or open to him the secret counsels and decrees of God concerning the Jewish nation, with them to convict these gainsayers; no, but to bring to his remembrance the scriptures of the Old Testament, and to teach him how to make use of them for their conviction. Those that are full of the Holy Ghost will be full of the scripture, as Stephen was.

2 That he quotes the scriptures according to the Septuagint translation, by which it appears he was one of the Hellenist Jews, who used that version in their synagogues. His following this, occasions divers variations from the Hebrew original in this discourse, which the judges of the court did not correct, because they knew how he was led into them; nor is it any derogation to the authority of that Spirit by which he spoke, for the variations are not material. We have a maxim, *Apices juris non sunt jura—Mere points of law are not law itself*. These verses vary on this his compendium of church history to the end of the book of Genesis. Observe,

(1.) His preface: *Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken*: He gives them, though not flattering titles, yet civil and respectful ones, signifying his expectation of fair treatment with them; from men he hopes to be treated with humanity, and he hopes that brethren and fathers will use him in a fatherly brotherly way. They are ready to look upon him as an apostate from the Jewish church, and an enemy to them. But, to make way for their conviction to the contrary, he addresses himself to them as *men, brethren, and fathers*, resolving to look on himself as one of them, though they would not so look on him. He craves their attention: *Hearken*; though he was about to tell them what they already knew, yet he begs them to hearken to it, because, though they knew it all, yet they would not without a very close application of mind know how to apply it to the case before them.

(2.) His entrance upon the discourse, which (whatever it may seem to those that read it carelessly) is far from being a long ramble only to amuse the hearers, and give them a diversion by telling them an old story. No; it is all pertinent and *ad rem—to the purpose*, to show them that God had not his heart so much upon that holy place and the law as they had; but, as he had a church in the world many ages before that holy place was founded and the ceremonial law given, so he would have when they should both have had their period.

[1] He begins with the call of Abraham

out of Ur of the Chaldees, by which he was set apart for God to be the trustee of the promise, and the father of the Old-Testament church. This we had an account of (Gen. xii. 1, &c.), and it is referred to, Neh. ix. 7, 8. His native country was an idolatrous country, it was Mesopotamia, (v. 2), *the land of the Chaldeans* (v. 4); thence God brought him at two removes, not too far at once, dealing tenderly with him; he first brought him out of the land of the Chaldeans to Charran, or Haran, a place midway between that and Canaan (Gen. xi. 31), and thence five years after, when his father was dead, he *removed him into the land of Canaan, wherein you now dwell*. It should seem, the first time that God spoke to Abraham, he appeared in some visible display of the divine presence, as the *God of glory* (v. 2), to settle a correspondence with him: and then afterwards he kept up that correspondence, and spoke to him from time to time as there was occasion, without repeating his visible appearances as the God of glory.

First, From this call of Abraham we may observe, 1. That in all our ways we must acknowledge God, and attend the directions of his providence, as of the pillar of cloud and fire. It is not said, Abraham removed, but, *God removed him into this land wherein you now dwell*, and he did but follow his Leader. 2. Those whom God takes into covenant with himself he distinguishes from the children of this world; they are effectually called out of the state, out of the land, of their nativity; they must sit loose to the world, and live above it and every thing in it, even that in it which is most dear to them, and must trust God to make it up to them in another and better country, that is, the heavenly, which he will show them. God's chosen must follow him with an implicit faith and obedience.

Secondly, But let us see what this is to Stephen's case. 1. They had charged him as a blasphemer of God, and an apostate from the church; therefore he shows that he is a son of Abraham, and values himself upon his being able to say, *Our father Abraham*, and that he is a faithful worshipper of the God of Abraham, whom therefore he here calls the *God of glory*. He also shows that he owns divine revelation, and that particularly by which the Jewish church was founded and incorporated. 2. They were proud of their being circumcised; and therefore he shows that Abraham was taken under God's guidance, and into communion with him, before he was circumcised, for that was not till v. 8. With this argument Paul proves that Abraham was justified by faith, because he was justified when he was in uncircumcision: and so here. 3. They had a mighty jealousy for this holy place, which may be meant of the whole land of Canaan; for it was called the *holy land, Immanuel's land*; and the destruction of the holy house



inferred that of the holy land. "Now," says Stephen, "you need not be so proud of it; for," (1.) "You came originally out of *Ur of the Chaldees*, where *your fathers served other gods* (Josh. xxiv. 2), and you were not the first planters of this country. Look therefore *unto the rock whence you were hewn, and the hole of the pit out of which you were digged*;" that is, as it follows there, "*look unto Abraham your father, for I called him alone* (Isa. li. 1, 2)—think of the meanness of your beginnings, and how you are entirely indebted to divine grace, and then you will see boasting to be for ever excluded. It was God that *raised up the righteous man from the east, and called him to his foot*, Isa. xli. 2. But, if his seed degenerate, let them know that God can destroy this holy place, and raise up to himself another people, for he is not a debtor to them." (2.) "God appeared in his glory to Abraham a great way off in Mesopotamia, before he came near Canaan, nay, before he dwelt in Charran; so that you must not think God's visits are confined to *this land*; no; he that brought the seed of the church from a country so far east can, if he pleases, carry the fruit of it to another country as far west." (3.) "God made no haste to bring him into this land, but let him linger some years by the way, which shows that God has not his heart so much upon this land as you have yours, neither is his honour, nor the happiness of his people, bound up in it. It is therefore neither blasphemy nor treason to say, It shall be destroyed."

[2.] The unsettled state of Abraham and his seed for many ages after he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees. God did indeed promise that he would *give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him*, v. 5. But, *First, As yet he had no child*, nor any by Sarah for many years after. *Secondly*, He himself was but a stranger and a sojourner in that land, and God *gave him no inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on*; but there he was as in a strange country, where he was always upon the remove, and could call nothing his own. *Thirdly*, His posterity did not come to the possession of it for a long time: *After four hundred years they shall come and serve me in this place, and not till then*, v. 7. *Nay, Fourthly*, They must undergo a great deal of hardship and difficulty before they shall be put into the possession of that land: they shall be brought into bondage, and ill treated in a strange land: and this, not as the punishment of any particular sin, as their wandering in the wilderness was, for we never find any such account given of their bondage in Egypt; but so God had appointed, and it must be. And *at the end of four hundred years, reckoning from the birth of Isaac, that nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge*, saith God. Now this teaches us, 1. That *known unto God are all his works*

beforehand. When Abraham had neither inheritance nor heir, yet he was told he should have both, the one a land of promise; and the other a child of promise; and therefore both had, and received, by faith. 2. That God's promises, though they are slow, are sure in the operation of them; they will be fulfilled in the season of them, though perhaps not so soon as we expect. 3. That though the people of God may be in distress and trouble for a time, yet God will at length both rescue them and reckon with those that do oppress them; for, *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth*.

But let us see how this serves Stephen's purpose. 1. The Jewish nation, for the honour of which they were so jealous, was very inconsiderable in its beginnings; as their common father Abraham was fetched out of obscurity in Ur of the Chaldees, so their tribes, and the heads of them, were fetched out of servitude in Egypt, when they were the *fewest of all people*, Deut. vii. 7. And what need is there of so much ado, as if their ruin, when they bring it upon themselves by sin, must be the ruin of the world, and of all God's interest in it? No; he that brought them out of Egypt can bring them into it again, as he threatened (Deut. xxviii. 68), and yet be no loser, while he can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham. 2. The slow steps by which the promise made to Abraham advanced towards the performance, and the many seeming contradictions here taken notice of, plainly show that it had a spiritual meaning, and that the land principally intended to be conveyed and secured by it was the *better country, that is, the heavenly*; as the apostle shows from this very argument that the patriarchs *sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, thence inferring that they looked for a city that had foundations*, Heb. xi. 9, 10. It was therefore no blasphemy to say, *Jesus shall destroy this place*, when at the same time we say, "He shall lead us to the heavenly Canaan, and put us in possession of that, of which the earthly Canaan was but a type and figure."

[3.] The building up of the family of Abraham, with the entail of divine grace upon it, and the disposals of divine Providence concerning it, which take up the rest of the book of Genesis.

*First*, God engaged to be a God to Abraham and his seed; and, in token of this, appointed that he and his male seed should be circumcised, Gen. xvii. 9, 10. He *gave him the covenant of circumcision*, that is, the covenant of which circumcision was the seal; and accordingly, when Abraham had a son born, he *circumcised him the eighth day* (v. 8), by which he was both bound by the divine law and interested in the divine promise; for circumcision had reference to both; being a seal of the covenant both on God's part—I will be to thee a *God all-sufficient*,



and on man's part—*Walk before me, and be thou perfect.* And then when effectual care was thus taken for the securing of Abraham's seed, to be a *seed to serve the Lord*, they began to multiply: *Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs*, or roots of the respective tribes.

*Secondly*, Joseph, the darling and blessing of his father's house, was abused by his brethren; they *envied him* because of his dreams, and *sold him into Egypt*. Thus early did the children of Israel begin to grudge those among them that were eminent and outshone others, of which their enmity to Christ, who, like Joseph, was a *Nazarite among his brethren*, was a great instance.

*Thirdly*, God owned Joseph in his troubles, and was with him (Gen. xxxix. 2, 21), by the influence of his Spirit, both on his mind, giving him comfort, and on the minds of those he was concerned with, giving him favour in their eyes. And thus at length he *delivered him out of his afflictions*, and Pharaoh made him the second man in the kingdom, Ps. cv. 20—22. And thus he not only arrived at great preferment among the Egyptians, but became the *shepherd and stone of Israel*, Gen. xlix. 24.

*Fourthly*, Jacob was compelled to go down into Egypt, by a famine which forced him out of Canaan, a *dearth* (which was a *great affliction*), to that degree that *our fathers found no sustenance in Canaan*, v. 11. That *fruitful land was turned into barrenness*. But, *hearing that there was corn in Egypt* (treasured up by the wisdom of his own son), he *sent out our fathers first to fetch corn*, v. 12. And the *second time* that they went, Joseph, who at first made himself strange to them, made himself known to them, and it was notified to Pharaoh that they were Joseph's kindred and had a dependence upon him (v. 13), whereupon, with Pharaoh's leave, *Joseph sent for his father Jacob to him into Egypt, with all his kindred and family*, to the number of *seventy-five souls*, to be subsisted there, v. 14. In Genesis they are said to be *seventy souls*, Gen. xli. 27. But the Septuagint there makes them seventy-five, and Stephen or Luke follows that version, as Luke iii. 36, where Cainan is inserted, which is not in the Hebrew text, but in the Septuagint. Some, by excluding Joseph and his sons, who were in Egypt before (which reduces the number to sixty-four), and adding the sons of the eleven patriarchs, make the number seventy-five.

*Fifthly*, Jacob and his sons died in Egypt (v. 15), but were carried over to be buried in Canaan, v. 16. A very considerable difficulty occurs here: it is said, *They were carried over into Sychem*, whereas Jacob was buried not in Sychem, but near Hebron, in the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Isaac were buried, Gen. i. 13. Joseph's bones indeed were buried in Sychem (Josh. xxiv. 32), and it seems by this (though it is not men-

tioned in the story) that the bones of all the other patriarchs were carried with his, each of them giving the same commandment concerning them that he had done; and of them this must be understood, not of Jacob himself. But then the sepulchre in Sychem was bought by Jacob (Gen. xxxiii. 19), and by this it is described, Josh. xxiv. 32. How then is it here said to be bought by Abraham? Dr. Whitby's solution of this is very sufficient. He supplies it thus: *Jacob went down into Egypt and died, he and our fathers; and (our fathers) were carried over into Sychem; and he, that is, Jacob, was laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money*, Gen. xxiii. 16. (Or, they were laid there, that is, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.) And they, namely, the other patriarchs, were *buried in the sepulchre bought of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem*.

Let us now see what this is to Stephen's purpose. 1. He still reminds them of the mean beginning of the Jewish nation, as a check to their priding themselves in the glories of that nation; and that it was by a miracle of mercy that they were raised up out of nothing to what they were, from so small a number to be so great a nation; but, if they answer not the intention of their being so raised, they can expect no other than to be destroyed. The prophets frequently put them in mind of the bringing of them out of Egypt, as an aggravation of their contempt of the law of God, and here it is urged upon them as an aggravation of their contempt of the gospel of Christ. 2. He reminds them likewise of the wickedness of those that were the patriarchs of their tribes, in envying their brother Joseph, and selling him into Egypt; and the same spirit was still working in them towards Christ and his ministers. 3. Their holy land, which they doted so much upon, their fathers were long kept out of the possession of, and met with dearth and great affliction in it; and therefore let them not think it strange if, after it has been so long polluted with sin, it be at length destroyed. 4. The faith of the patriarchs in desiring to be buried in the land of Canaan plainly showed that they had an eye to the heavenly country, to which it was the design of this Jesus to lead them.

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. 19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. 20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's

house three months : 2. And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. 23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian : 25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them : but they understood not. 26 And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren ; why do ye wrong one to another ? 27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us ? 28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday ? 29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

Stephen here goes on to relate,

I. The wonderful increase of the people of Israel in Egypt ; it was by a wonder of providence that in a little time they advanced from a family into a nation. 1. It was *when the time of the promise drew nigh*—the time when they were to be formed into a people. During the first two hundred and fifteen years after the promise made to Abraham, the children of the covenant were increased but to seventy ; but in the latter two hundred and fifteen years they increased to six hundred thousand fighting men. The motion of providence is sometimes quickest when it comes nearest the centre. Let us not be discouraged at the slowness of the proceedings towards the accomplishment of God's promises ; God knows how to redeem the time that seems to have been lost, and, *when the year of the redeemed is at hand*, can do a double work in a single day. 2. It was *in Egypt*, where they were oppressed, and ruled with rigour ; when their lives were made so bitter to them that, one would think, they should have wished to be written childless, yet they married, in faith that God in due time would visit them ; and God *blessed them*, who thus honoured him, saying, *Be fruitful, and multiply*. Suffering times have often been growing times with the church

II. The extreme hardships which they underwent there, *v. 18, 19*. When the Egyptians observed them to increase in number they increased their burdens, in which Stephen observes three things :—1. Their base ingratitude : They were oppressed by *another king that knew not Joseph*, that is, did not consider the good service that Joseph had done to that nation ; for, if he had, he would not have made so ill a requital to his relations and family. Those that injure good people are very ungrateful, for they are the blessings of the age and place they live in. 2. Their hellish craft and policy : *They dealt subtly with our kindred*. *Come on*, said they, *let us deal wisely*, thinking thereby to secure themselves, but it proved dealing foolishly, for they did but treasure up wrath by it. Those are in a great mistake who think they deal wisely for themselves when they deal deceitfully or unmercifully with their brethren. 3. Their barbarous and inhuman cruelty. That they might effectually extirpate them, *they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live*. The killing of their infant seed seemed a very likely way to crush an infant nation. Now Stephen seems to observe this to them, not only that they might further see how mean their beginnings were, fitly represented (perhaps with an eye to the exposing of the young children in Egypt) by the forlorn state of a helpless, out-cast infant (*Ezek. xvi. 4*), and how much they were indebted to God for his care of them, which they had forfeited, and made themselves unworthy of : but also that they might consider that what they were now doing against the Christian church in its infancy was as impious and unjust, and would be in the issue as fruitless and ineffectual, as that was which the Egyptians did against the Jewish church in its infancy. "You think you deal subtly in your ill treatment of us, and, in persecuting young converts, you do as they did in casting out the young children ; but you will find it is to no purpose, in spite of your malice Christ's disciples will *increase and multiply*."

III. The raising up of *Moses to be their deliverer*. Stephen was charged with having spoken blasphemous words against Moses, in answer to which charge he here speaks very honourably of him. 1. Moses was born when the persecution of Israel was at the hottest, especially in that most cruel instance of it, the murdering of the new-born children : *At that time, Moses was born* (*v. 20*), and was himself in danger, as soon as he came into the world (as our Saviour also was at Bethlehem) of falling a sacrifice to that bloody edict. God is preparing for his people's deliverance, when their way is darkest, and their distress deepest. 2. *He was exceedingly fair* : his face began to shine as soon as he was born, as a happy presage of the honour God designed to put upon him ; he was *ἀσπίος ῥῶ θεῷ*—*fair towards God* ; he was sanctified from the womb, and



this made him beautiful in God's eyes; for it is the beauty of holiness that is in God's sight of great price. 3. He was wonderfully preserved in his infancy, first, by the care of his tender parents, who *nourished him three months in their own house*, as long as they durst; and then by a favourable providence that threw him *into the arms of Pharaoh's daughter, who took him up, and nourished him as her own son* (v. 21); for those whom God designs to make special use of he will take special care of. And did he thus protect the child Moses? Much more will he secure the interests of his holy child Jesus (as he is called *ch. iv. 27*) from the enemies that are gathered together against him. 4. He became a great scholar (v. 22): *he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*, who were then famed for all manner of polite literature, particularly philosophy, astronomy, and (which perhaps helped to lead them to idolatry) hieroglyphics. Moses, having his education at court, had opportunity of improving himself by the best books, tutors, and conversation, in all the arts and sciences, and had a genius for them. Only we have reason to think that he had not so far forgotten the God of his fathers as to acquaint himself with the unlawful studies and practices of the magicians of Egypt, any further than was necessary to the confuting of them. 5. He became a prime minister of state in Egypt. This seems to be meant by his being *mighty in words and deeds*. Though he had not a ready way of expressing himself, but stammered, yet he spoke admirably good sense, and every thing he said commanded assent, and carried its own evidence and force of reason along with it; and, in business, none went on with such courage, and conduct, and success. Thus was he prepared, by human helps, for those services, which, after all, he could not be thoroughly furnished for without divine illumination. Now, by all this, Stephen will make it appear that, notwithstanding the malicious insinuations of his persecutors, he had as high and honourable thoughts of Moses as they had.

IV. The attempts which Moses made to deliver Israel, which they spurned, and would not close in with. This Stephen insists much upon, and it serves for a key to this story (Exod. ii. 11—15), as does also that other construction which is put upon it by the apostle, Heb. xi. 24—26. There it is represented as an act of holy self-denial, here as a designed prelude to, or entrance upon, the public service he was to be called out to (v. 23): *When he was full forty years old, in the prime of his time for preferment in the court of Egypt, it came into his heart* (for God put it there) *to visit his brethren the children of Israel*, and to see which way he might do them any service; and he showed himself as a public person, with a public character. 1. As Israel's saviour. This he gave a specimen

of in avenging an oppressed Israelite, and killing the Egyptian that abused him (v. 24). *Seeing one of his brethren suffer wrong*, he was moved with compassion towards the sufferer, and a just indignation at the wrong-doer, as men in public stations should be, and he *avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian*, which, if he had been only a private person, he could not lawfully have done; but he knew that his commission from heaven would bear him out, and he supposed that his brethren (who could not but have some knowledge of the promise made to Abraham, *that the nation that should oppress them God would judge*) would have understood that God by his hand would deliver them; for he could not have had either presence of mind or strength of body to do what he did, if he had not been clothed with such a divine power as evinced a divine authority. If they had but understood the signs of the times, they might have taken this for the dawning of the day of their deliverance; but they understood not, they did not take this, as it was designed, for the setting up of a standard, and sounding of a trumpet, to proclaim Moses their deliverer. 2. As Israel's judge. This he gave a specimen of, the very next day, in offering to accommodate matters between two contending Hebrews, wherein he plainly assumed a public character (v. 26). *He showed himself to them as they strove*, and, putting on an air of majesty and authority, *he would have set them at one again*, and as their prince have determined the controversy between them, *saying, Sirs, you are brethren*, by birth and profession of religion; *why do you wrong one to another?* For he observed that (as in most strifes) there was a fault on both sides; and therefore, in order to peace and friendship, there must be a mutual remission and condescension. When Moses was to be Israel's deliverer out of Egypt, he slew the Egyptians, and so delivered Israel out of their hands; but, when he was to be Israel's judge and lawgiver, he ruled them with the golden sceptre, not the iron rod; he did not kill and slay them when they strove, but gave them excellent laws and statutes, and decided upon their complaints and appeals made to him, Exod. xviii. 16. But the contending Israelite that was most in the wrong thrust him away (v. 27), would not bear the reproof, though a just and gentle one, but was ready to fly in his face, with, *Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?* Proud and litigious spirits are impatient of check and control. Rather would these Israelites have their bodies ruled with rigour by their task-masters than be delivered, and have their minds ruled with reason, by their deliverer. The wrong-doer was so enraged at the reproof given him that he upbraided Moses with the service he had done to their nation in killing the Egyptian, which, if they had pleased, would have been the earnest of further and greater service. *Wilt thou kill*

*me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? v. 28*, charging that upon him as his crime, and threatening to accuse him for it, which was the hanging out of the flag of defiance to the Egyptians, and the banner of love and deliverance to Israel. Hereupon *Moses fled into the land of Midian*, and made no further attempt to deliver Israel till forty years after; he settled as a stranger in Midian, married, and had two sons, by Jethro's daughter, *v. 29*.

Now let us see how this serves Stephen's purpose. 1. They charged him with blaspheming Moses, in answer to which he retorts upon them the indignities which their fathers did to Moses, which they ought to be ashamed of, and humbled for, instead of picking quarrels thus, under pretence of zeal for the honour of Moses, with one that had as great a veneration for him as any of them had. 2. They persecuted him for disputing in defence of Christ and his gospel, in opposition to which they set up Moses and his law: "But," saith he, "you had best take heed," (1.) "Lest you hereby do as your fathers did, refuse and reject one whom God has raised up to be to you a prince and a Saviour; you may understand, if you will not wilfully shut your eyes against the light, that God will, by this Jesus, deliver you out of a worse slavery than that in Egypt; take heed then of thrusting him away, but receive him as a ruler and a judge over you." (2.) "Lest you hereby fare as your fathers fared, who for this were very justly left to die in their slavery, for the deliverance came not till forty years after. This will be the issue of it, you put away the gospel from you, and it will be sent to the Gentiles; you will not have Christ, and you shall not have him, so shall your doom be." Matt. xxiii. 38, 39.

30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, 32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. 33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. 34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. 35 This Moses whom they refused, saying,

Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. 36 He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. 38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: 39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, 40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

Stephen here proceeds in his story of Moses and let any one judge whether these are the words of one that was a blasphemer of Moses or no; nothing could be spoken more honourably of him. Here is,

I. The vision which he saw of the glory of God at the bush (*v. 30*): *When forty years had expired* (during all which time Moses was buried alive in Midian, and was now grown old, and one would think past service), that it might appear that all his performances were products of a divine power and promise (as it appeared that Isaac was a child of promise by his being born of parents stricken in years), now, at eighty years old, he enters upon that post of honour to which he was born, in recompence for his self-denial at forty years old. Observe, 1. Where God appeared to him: *In the wilderness of Mount Sinai, v. 30*. And, when he appeared to him there, that was holy ground (*v. 33*), which Stephen takes notice of, as a check to those who prided themselves in the temple, that holy place, as if there were no communion to be had with God but there; whereas God met Moses, and manifested himself to him, in a remote obscure place in the wilderness of Sinai. They deceive themselves if they think God is confined to places; he can bring his people into a wilderness, and there speak comfortably to them. 2. How he appeared,



to him: *In a flame of fire* (for our God is a consuming fire), and yet *the bush*, in which his fire was, though combustible matter, *was not consumed*, which, as it represented the state of Israel in Egypt (where, though they were in the fire of affliction, yet they were not consumed), so perhaps it may be looked upon as a type of Christ's incarnation, and the union between the divine and human nature: God, manifested in the flesh, was as the flame of fire manifested in the bush. 3. How Moses was affected with this: (1.) *He wondered at the sight*, v. 31. It was a phenomenon with the solution of which all his Egyptian learning could not furnish him. He had the curiosity at first to pry into it: *I will turn aside now, and see this great sight*; but the nearer he drew the more he was struck with amazement; and, (2.) *He trembled, and durst not behold*, durst not look stedfastly upon it; for he was soon aware that it was not a fiery meteor, but *the angel of the Lord*; and no other than *the Angel of the covenant*, the Son of God himself. This set him a trembling. Stephen was accused for blaspheming Moses and God (*ch. vi. 11*), as if Moses had been a little god; but by this it appears that he was a man, *subject to like passions as we are*, and particularly that of fear, upon any appearance of the divine majesty and glory.

II. The declaration which he heard of the covenant of God (*v. 32*): *The voice of the Lord came to him*; for faith comes by hearing; and this was it: *I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*; and therefore, 1. "I am the same that I was." The covenant God made with Abraham some ages ago was, *I will be to thee a God*, a God all-sufficient. "Now," saith God, "that covenant is still in full force; it is not cancelled nor forgotten, but I am, as I was, the God of Abraham, and now I will make it to appear so;" for all the favours, all the honours God put upon Israel, were founded upon this covenant with Abraham, and flowed from it. 2. "I will be the same that I am." For if the death of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, cannot break the covenant-relation between God and them (as by his it appears it cannot), then nothing else can: and then he will be a God, (1.) To their souls, which are now separated from their bodies. Our Saviour by this proves the future state, *Matt. xxii. 31, 32*. Abraham is dead, and yet God is still his God, therefore Abraham is still alive. God never did that for him in this world which would answer the true intent and full extent of that promise, that he would be the God of Abraham; and therefore it must be done for him in the other world. Now this is that life and immortality which are brought to light by the gospel, for the full conviction of the Sadducees, who denied it. Those therefore who stood up in defence of the gospel, and endeavoured to propagate it, were so far

from blaspheming Moses that they did the greatest honour imaginable to Moses, and that glorious discovery which God made of himself to him at the bush. (2.) To their seed. God, in declaring himself thus the God of their fathers, intimated his kindness to their seed, that they should be *beloved for the fathers' sakes*, *Rom. xi. 28*; *Deut. vii. 8*. Now the preachers of the gospel preached up this covenant, *the promise made of God unto the fathers*: unto which promise those of the twelve tribes that did continue serving God hoped to come, *ch. xxvi. 6, 7*. And shall they, under colour of supporting the holy place and the law, oppose the covenant which was made with Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, before the law was given, and long before the holy place was built? Since God's glory must be for ever advanced, and our glorying for ever silenced, God will have our salvation to be by promise, and not by the law; the Jews therefore who persecuted the Christians, under pretence that they blasphemed the law, did themselves blaspheme the promise, and forsook all their own mercies that were contained in it.

III. The commission which God gave him to deliver Israel out of Egypt. The Jews set up Moses in competition with Christ, and accused Stephen as a blasphemer because he did not do so too. But Stephen here shows that Moses was an eminent type of Christ, as he was Israel's deliverer. When God had declared himself the God of Abraham he proceeded, 1. To order Moses into a reverent posture: "*Put off thy shoes from thy feet*. Enter not upon sacred things with low, and cold, and common thoughts. *Keep thy foot*, *Eccl. v. 1*. Be not hasty and rash in thy approaches to God; tread softly." 2. To order Moses into a very eminent service. When he is ready to receive commands, he shall have commission. He is commissioned to demand leave from Pharaoh for Israel to go out of his land, and to enforce that demand, *v. 34*. Observe, (1.) The notice God took both of their sufferings and of their sense of their sufferings: *I have seen, I have seen their affliction, and have heard their groaning*. God has a compassionate regard to the troubles of his church, and the groans of his persecuted people; and their deliverance takes rise from his pity. (2.) The determination he fixed to redeem them by the hand of Moses: *I am come down to deliver them*. It should seem, though God is present in all places, yet he uses that expression here of coming down to deliver them because that deliverance was typical of what Christ did, when, *for us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven; he that ascended first descended*. Moses is the man that must be employed: *Come, and I will send thee into Egypt*: and, if God send him, he will own him and give him success.

IV. His acting in pursuance of this commission, wherein he was a figure of the Mes-

isian. And Stephen takes notice here again of the slights they had put upon him, the affronts they had given him, and their refusal to have him to reign over them, as tending very much to magnify his agency in their deliverance. 1. God put honour upon him whom they put contempt upon (v. 35): *This Moses whom they refused* (whose kind offers and good offices they rejected with scorn, saying, *Who made thee a ruler and a judge? Thou takest too much upon thee, thou son of Levi*, Num. xvi. 3), this same Moses *did God send to be a ruler, and a deliverer, by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush*. It may be understood either that God sent to him by the hand of the angel, or that by the hand of the angel going along with him he became a complete deliverer. Now, by this example, Stephen would intimate to the council that *this Jesus whom they now refused*, as their fathers did Moses, saying, *Who made thee a prophet and a king? Who gave thee this authority?* even this same has God advanced to be a prince and a Saviour, a ruler and a deliverer; as the apostles had told them awhile ago (ch. v. 30, 31), that the stone which the builders refused was become the head-stone in the corner, ch. iv. 11. 2. God showed favour to them by him, and he was very forward to serve them, though they had thrust him away. God might justly have refused them his service, and he might justly have declined it; but it is all forgotten: they are not so much as upbraided with it, v. 36. *He brought them out*, notwithstanding, *after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt* which were afterwards continued for the completing of their deliverance, according as the case called for them) *in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years*. So far is he from blaspheming Moses that he admires him as a glorious instrument in the hand of God for the forming of the Old-Testament church. But it does not at all derogate from his just honour to say that he was but an instrument, and that he is outshone by this Jesus, whom he encourages these Jews yet to close with, and to come into his interest, not fearing but that then they should be received into his favour, and receive benefit by him, as the people of Israel were delivered by Moses, though they had once refused him.

V. His prophecy of Christ and his grace, v. 37. He not only was a type of Christ (many were so that perhaps had not an actual foresight of his day), but Moses spoke of him (v. 37): *This is that Moses who said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren*. This is spoken of as one of the greatest honours God put upon him (nay, as that which exceeded all the rest), that by him he gave notice to the children of Israel of the great prophet that should come into the world, raised their expectation of him, and required them to receive him. When his

bringing them out of Egypt is spoken of it is with an emphasis of honour, *This is that Moses*, Exod. vi. 26. And so it is here, *This is that Moses*. Now this is very full to Stephen's purpose; in asserting that Jesus should change the customs of the ceremonial law, he was so far from blaspheming Moses that really he did him the greatest honour imaginable, by showing how the prophecy of Moses was accomplished, which was so clear, that, as Christ told them himself, *If they had believed Moses, they would have believed him*, John v. 46. 1. Moses, in God's name, told them that, in the fulness of time, they should have a prophet raised up among them, one of their own nation, that should be like unto him (Deut. xviii. 15, 18),—a ruler and a deliverer, a judge and a lawgiver, like him,—who should therefore have authority to change the customs that he had delivered, and to bring in a better hope, as *the Mediator of a better testament*. 2. He charged them to hear that prophet, to receive his dictates, to admit the change he would make in their customs, and to submit to him in every thing; “and this will be the greatest honour you can do to Moses and to his law, who said, *Hear you him*; and came to be a witness to the repetition of this charge by a voice from heaven, at the transfiguration of Christ, and by his silence gave consent to it,” Matt. xvii. 5.

VI. The eminent services which Moses continued to do to the people of Israel, after he had been instrumental to bring them out of Egypt, v. 38. And herein also he was a type of Christ, who yet so far exceeds him that it is no blasphemy to say, “He has authority to change the customs that Moses delivered.” It was the honour of Moses, 1. That he was in the church in the wilderness; he presided in all the affairs of it for forty years, was king in Jeshurun, Deut. xxxiii. 5. The camp of Israel is here called *the church in the wilderness*; for it was a sacred society, incorporated by a divine charter under a divine government, and blessed with divine revelation. The church in the wilderness was a church, though it was not yet perfectly formed, as it was to be when they came to Canaan, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes, Deut. xii. 8, 9. It was the honour of Moses that he was in that church, and many a time it had been destroyed if Moses had not been in it to intercede for it. But Christ is the president and guide of a more excellent and glorious church than that in the wilderness was, and is more in it, as the life and soul of it, than Moses could be in that. 2. That he was with the angel that spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers—was with him in the holy mount twice forty days, with the angel of the covenant, Michael, our prince. Moses was immediately conversant with God, but never lay in his bosom as Christ did from eternity. Or these word



may be taken thus: *Moses was in the church in the wilderness*, but it was *with the angel that spoke to him in mount Sinai*, that is, at the burning bush; for that was said to be at mount Sinai (v. 30); that angel went before him, and was guide to him, else he could not have been a guide to Israel; of this God speaks (Exod. xxiii. 20), *I send an angel before thee*, and Exod. xxxiii. 2. And see Num. xx. 16. He was in the church with the angel, without whom he could have done no service to the church; but Christ is himself that angel which was with the church in the wilderness, and therefore has an authority above Moses. 3. *That he received the lively oracles to give unto them*; not only the ten commandments, but the other instructions which the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, *Speak them to the children of Israel*. (1.) The words of God are oracles, certain and infallible, and of unquestionable authority and obligation; they are to be consulted as oracles, and by them all controversies must be determined. (2.) They are *lively oracles*, for they are the oracles of the living God, not of the dumb and dead idols of the heathens: the word that God speaks is spirit and life; not that the law of Moses could give life, but it showed the way to life: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*. (3.) Moses received them from God, and delivered nothing as an oracle to the people but what *he had first received from God*. (4.) The lively oracles which he received from God he faithfully gave to the people, to be observed and preserved. It was the principal privilege of the Jews that *to them were committed the oracles of God*; and it was by the hand of Moses that they were committed. As Moses gave them not that bread, so neither did he give them that aw from heaven (John vi. 32), but God gave it to them; and he that gave them those customs by his servant Moses might, no doubt, when he pleased, change the customs by his Son Jesus, who received more lively oracles to give unto us than Moses did.

VII. The contempt that was, after this, and notwithstanding this, put upon him by the people. Those that charged Stephen with speaking against Moses would do well to answer what their own ancestors had done, and they tread in their ancestors' steps. 1. *They would not obey him, but thrust him from them*, v. 39. They murmured at him, mutinied against him, refused to obey his orders, and sometimes were ready to stone him. Moses did indeed give them an excellent law, but by this it appeared that *it could not make the comers thereunto perfect* (Heb. x. 1), for *in their hearts they turned back again into Egypt*, and preferred their garlic and onions there before the manna they had under the guidance of Moses, or the milk and honey they hoped for in Canaan. Observe, Their secret disaffection to Moses, with their inclination to Egyptianism, if I

may so call it. This was, in effect, turning back to Egypt; it was doing it in heart. Many that pretend to be going forward towards Canaan, by keeping up a show and profession of religion, are, at the same time, in their hearts turning back to Egypt, like Lot's wife to Sodom, and will be dealt with as deserters, for it is the heart that God looks at. Now, if the customs that Moses delivered to them could not prevail to change them, wonder not that Christ comes to change the customs, and to introduce a more spiritual way of worship. 2. *They made a golden calf instead of him*, which, besides the affront that was thereby offered to God, was a great indignity to Moses: for it was upon this consideration that they made the calf, because "*as for this Moses, who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him*"; therefore make us gods of gold;" as if a calf were sufficient to supply the want of Moses, and as capable of going before them into the promised land. *So they made a calf in those days when the law was given them, and offered sacrifices unto the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their own hands*. So proud were they of their new god that when they had *sat down to eat and drink, they rose up to play*! By all this it appears that there was a great deal which the law could not do, *in that it was weak through the flesh*; it was therefore necessary that this law should be perfected by a better hand, and he was no blasphemer against Moses who said that Christ had done it.

42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, *O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?* 43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon: 44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. 45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; 46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. 47 But Solomon built him a house. 48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth



not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, 49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? 50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

Two things we have in these verses:—

I. Stephen upbraids them with the idolatry of their fathers, which God gave them up to, as a punishment for their early forsaking him in worshipping the golden calf; and this was the saddest punishment of all for that sin, as it was of the idolatry of the Gentile world that God gave them up to a reprobate mind. When Israel was joined to idols, joined to the golden calf, and not long after to Baal-peor, God said, *Let them alone; let them go on* (v. 42): *Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven.* He particularly cautioned them not to do it, at their peril, and gave them reasons why they should not; but, when they were bent upon it, he gave them up to their own hearts' lust, withdrew his restraining grace, and then they walked in their own counsels, and were so scandalously mad upon their idols as never any people were. Compare Deut. iv. 19 with Jer. viii. 2. For this he quotes a passage out of Amos v. 25. For it would be less invidious to tell them their own [character and doom] from an Old-Testament prophet, who upbraids them,

1. For not sacrificing to their own God in the wilderness (v. 42): *Have you offered to me slain beasts, and sacrifices, by the space of forty years in the wilderness?* No; during all that time sacrifices to God were intermitted; they did not so much as keep the pass-over after the second year. It was God's condescension to them that he did not insist upon it during their unsettled state; but then let them consider how ill they requited him in offering sacrifices to idols, when God dispensed with their offering them to him. This is also a check to their zeal for the customs that Moses delivered to them, and their fear of having them changed by *this Jesus*, that immediately after they were delivered these customs were for forty years together disused as needless things.

2. For sacrificing to other gods after they came to Canaan (v. 43): *You took up the tabernacle of Moloch.* Moloch was the idol of the children of Ammon, to which they barbarously offered their own children in sacrifice, which they could not do without great terror and grief to themselves and their families; yet this unnatural idolatry they arrived at, when God gave them up to worship the host of heaven. See 2 Chron. xxviii. 3. It was surely the strongest delusion that ever people were given up to, and the greatest instance of the power of Satan in the children of disobedience, and therefore it is here spoken of emphatically: *Yea, you took up the*

*tabernacle of Moloch*, you submitted even to that, and to the worship of the star of your god Remphan. Some think Remphan signifies the moon, as Moloch does the sun; others take it for Saturn, for that planet is called Remphan in the Syriac and Persian languages. The Septuagint puts it for *Chim*, as being a name more commonly known. They had images representing the star, like the silver shrines for Diana, here called the figures which they made to worship. Dr. Lightfoot thinks they had figures representing the whole starry firmament, with all the constellations, and the planets, and these are called Remphan—"the high representation," like the celestial globe: a poor thing to make an idol of, and yet better than a golden calf! Now for this it is threatened, *I will carry you away beyond Babylon.* In Amos it is *beyond Damascus*, meaning to *Babylon*, the land of the north. But Stephen changes it, with an eye to the captivity of the ten tribes, who were carried away beyond Babylon, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 2 Kings xvii. 6. Let it not therefore seem strange to them to hear of the destruction of this place, for they had heard of it many a time from the prophets of the Old Testament, who were not therefore accused as blasphemers by any but the wicked rulers. It was observed, in the debate on Jeremiah's case, that Micah was not called to an account though he prophesied, saying, *Zion shall be ploughed as a field*, Jer. xvi. 18, 19.

II. He gives an answer particularly to the charge exhibited against him relating to the temple, that he spoke blasphemous words against that holy place, v. 44—50. He was accused for saying that Jesus would destroy this holy place: "And what if I did say so?" (saith Stephen) "the glory of the holy God is not bound up in the glory of this holy place, but that may be preserved untouched, though this be laid in the dust;" for, 1. "It was not till our fathers came into the wilderness, in their way to Canaan, that they had any fixed place of worship; and yet the patriarchs, many ages before, worshipped God acceptably at the altars they had adjoining to their own tents in the open air—*sub dio*; and he that was worshipped without a holy place in the first, and best, and purest ages of the Old-Testament church, may and will be so when this holy place is destroyed, without any diminution to his glory." 2. The holy place was at first but a tabernacle, mean and movable, showing itself to be short-lived, and not designed to continue always. Why might not this holy place, though built of stones, be decently brought to its end, and give place to its betters, as well as that though framed of curtains? As it was no dishonour, but an honour to God, that the tabernacle gave way to the temple, so it is now that the material temple gives way to the spiritual one, and so it will be when, at last, the spiritual temple shall give



way to the eternal one. 3. That tabernacle was a tabernacle of witness, or of testimony, a figure for the time then present (Heb. ix. 9), a figure of good things to come, of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not men, Heb. viii. 2. This was the glory both of the tabernacle and temple, that they were erected for a testimony of that temple of God which in the latter days should be opened in heaven (Rev. xi. 19), and of Christ's tabernacling on earth (as the word is, John i. 14), and of the temple of his body. 4. That tabernacle was framed just as God appointed, and according to the fashion which Moses saw in the mount, which plainly intimates that it had reference to good things to come. Its rise being heavenly, its meaning and tendency were so; and therefore it was no diminution at all to its glory to say that this temple made with hands should be destroyed, in order to the building of another made without hands, which was Christ's crime (Mark xiv. 58), and Stephen's. 5. That tabernacle was pitched first in the wilderness; it was not a native of this land of yours (to which you think it must for ever be confined), but was brought in in the next age, by our fathers, who came after those who first erected it, into the possession of the Gentiles, into the land of Canaan, which had long been in the possession of the devoted nations whom God drove out before the face of our fathers. And why may not God set up his spiritual temple, as he had done the material tabernacle, in those countries that were now the possession of the Gentiles? That tabernacle was brought in by those who came with Jesus, that is, Joshua. And I think, for distinction sake, and to prevent mistakes, it ought to be so read, both here and Heb. iv. 8. Yet in naming Joshua here, which in Greek is Jesus, there may be a tacit intimation that as the Old-Testament Joshua brought in that typical tabernacle, so the New-Testament Joshua should bring in the true tabernacle into the possession of the Gentiles. 6. That tabernacle continued for many ages, even to the days of David, above four hundred years, before there was any thought of building a temple, v. 45. David, having found favour before God, did indeed desire this further favour, to have leave to build God a house, to be a constant settled tabernacle, or dwelling-place, for the Shechinah, or the tokens of the presence of the God of Jacob, v. 46. Those who have found favour with God should show themselves forward to advance the interests of his kingdom among men. 7. God had his heart so little upon a temple, or such a holy place as they were so jealous for, that, when David desired to build one, he was forbidden to do it; God was in no haste for one, as he told David (2 Sam. vii. 7), and therefore it was not he, but his son Solomon, some years after, that built him a house. David had all that sweet communion with God in public worship which we read of in his Psalms

before there was any temple built. 8. God often declared that temples made with hands were not his delight, nor could add any thing to the perfection of his rest and joy. Solomon, when he dedicated the temple, acknowledged that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands; he has not need of them, is not benefited by them, cannot be confined to them. The whole world is his temple, in which he is every where present, and fills it with his glory; and what occasion has he for a temple then to manifest himself in? Indeed the pretended deities of the heathen needed temples made with hands, for they were gods made with hands (v. 41), and had no other place to manifest themselves in than in their own temples; but the one only true and living God needs no temple, for the heaven is his throne, in which he rests, and the earth is his footstool, over which he rules (v. 49, 50), and therefore, What house will you build me, comparable to this which I have already? Or, what is the place of my rest? What need have I of a house, either to repose myself in or to show myself? Hath not my hand made all these things? And these show his eternal power and Godhead (Rom. i. 20); they so show themselves to all mankind that those who worship other gods are without excuse. And as the world is thus God's temple, wherein he is manifested, so it is God's temple in which he will be worshipped. As the earth is full of his glory, and is therefore his temple (Isa. vi. 3), so the earth is, or shall be, full of his praise (Hab. iii. 3), and all the ends of the earth shall fear him (Ps. lxxvii. 7), and upon this account it is his temple. It was therefore no reflection at all upon this holy place, however they might take it, to say that Jesus should destroy this temple, and set up another, into which all nations should be admitted, ch. xv. 16, 17. And it would not seem strange to those who considered that scripture which Stephen here quotes (Isa. lxvi. 1—3), which, as it expressed God's comparative contempt of the external part of his service, so it plainly foretold the rejection of the unbelieving Jews, and the welcome of the Gentiles that were of a contrite spirit into the church.

51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

Stephen was going on in his discourse (as it should seem by the thread of it) to

show that, as the temple, so the temple-service must come to an end, and it would be the glory of both to give way to that worship of the Father in spirit and in truth which was to be established in the kingdom of the Messiah, stripped of the pompous ceremonies of the old law, and so he was going to apply all this which he had said more closely to his present purpose; but he perceived they could not bear it. They could patiently hear the history of the Old Testament told (it was a piece of learning which they themselves dealt much in); but if Stephen go about to tell them that their power and tyranny must come down, and that the church must be governed by a spirit of holiness and love, and heavenly-mindedness, they will not so much as give him the hearing. It is probable that he perceived this, and that they were going to silence him; and therefore he breaks off abruptly in the midst of his discourse, and by that spirit of wisdom, courage, and power, where-with he was filled, he sharply rebuked his persecutors, and exposed their true character; for, if they will not admit the testimony of the gospel to them, it shall become a testimony against them.

I. They, like their fathers, were stubborn and wilful, and would not be wrought upon by the various methods God took to reclaim and reform them; they were like their fathers, inflexible both to the word of God and to his providences. 1. They were *stiff-necked* (v. 51), and would not submit their necks to the sweet and easy yoke of God's government, nor draw in it, but were *like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*; or they would not bow their heads, no, not to God himself, would not do obeisance to him, would not humble themselves before him. The stiff neck is the same with the hard heart, obstinate and contumacious, and that will not yield—the general character of the Jewish nation, Exod. xxxii. 9; xxxiii. 3, 5; xxxiv. 9; Deut. ix. 6, 13; xxxi. 27; Ezek. ii. 4. 2. They were *uncircumcised in heart and ears*; their hearts and ears were not devoted and given up to God, as the body of the people were in profession by the sign of circumcision: "In name and show you are circumcised Jews, but in heart and ears you are still uncircumcised heathens, and pay no more deference to the authority of your God than they do, Jer. ix. 26. You are under the power of unmortified lusts and corruptions, which stop your ears to the voice of God, and harden your hearts to that which is both most commanding and most affecting." They had not that *circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh*, Col. ii. 11.

II. They, like their fathers, were not only not influenced by the methods God took to reform them, but they were enraged and incensed against them: *You do always resist the Holy Ghost*. 1. They resisted the Holy

Ghost speaking to them by the prophets, whom they opposed and contradicted, hated and ridiculed; this seems especially meant here, by the following explication, *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* In persecuting and silencing those that spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost they resisted the Holy Ghost. Their fathers resisted the Holy Ghost in the prophets that God raised up to them, and so did they in Christ's apostles and ministers, who spoke by the same Spirit, and had greater measures of his gifts than the prophets of the Old Testament had, and yet were more resisted. 2. They resisted the Holy Ghost striving with them by their own consciences, and would not comply with the convictions and dictates of them. God's Spirit strove with them as with the old world, but in vain; they resisted him, took part with their corruptions against their convictions, and rebelled against the light. There is that in our sinful hearts that always resists the Holy Ghost, a flesh that lusts against the Spirit, and wars against his motions; but in the hearts of God's elect, when the fulness of time comes, this resistance is overcome and overpowered, and after a struggle the throne of Christ is set up in the soul, and every thought that had exalted itself against it is brought into captivity to it, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. That grace therefore which effects this change might more fitly be called *victorious* grace than *irresistible*.

III. They, like their fathers, persecuted and slew those whom God sent unto them to call them to duty, and make them offers of mercy. 1. Their fathers had been the cruel and constant persecutors of the Old-Testament prophets (v. 52): *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* More or less, one time or other, they had a blow at them all. With regard even to those that lived in the best reigns, when the princes did not persecute them, there was a malignant party in the nation that mocked at them and abused them, and most of them were at last, either by colour of law or popular fury, put to death; and that which aggravated the sin of persecuting the prophets was, that the business of the prophets they were so spiteful at was to show before of the coming of the just One, to give notice of God's kind intentions towards that people, to send the Messiah among them in the fulness of time. Those that were the messengers of such glad tidings should have been courted and caressed, and have had the preferments of the best of benefactors; but, instead of this, they had the treatment of the worst of malefactors. 2. They had been the *betrayers and murderers of the just One* himself, as Peter had told them, ch. iii. 14, 15; v. 30. They had hired Judas to betray him, and had in a manner forced Pilate to condemn him, and therefore it is charged upon them that they were his betrayers and murderers. Thus



they were the genuine seed of those who slew the prophets that foretold his coming, which, by slaying him, they showed they would have done if they had lived then; and thus, as our Saviour had told them, they brought upon themselves the guilt of the blood of all the prophets. To which of the prophets would those have shown any respect who had no regard to the Son of God himself?

IV. They, like their fathers, put contempt upon divine revelation, and would not be guided and governed by it; and this was the aggravation of their sin, that God had given, as to their fathers his law, so to them his gospel, in vain. 1. Their fathers received the law, and did not observe it, v. 53. God wrote to them the great things of his law, after he had first spoken them to them; and yet they were counted by them as a strange or foreign thing, which they were no way concerned in. The law is said to be *received by the disposition of angels*, because angels were employed in the solemnity of giving the law, in the thunderings and lightnings, and the sound of the trumpet. It is said to be *ordained by angels* (Gal. iii. 19), God is said to come *with ten thousand* of his saints to give the law (Deut. xxxiii. 2), and it was a *word spoken by angels*, Heb. ii. 2. This put an honour both upon the law and the Law-giver, and should increase our veneration for both. But those that thus received the law yet kept it not, but by making the golden calf broke it immediately in a capital instance. 2. They received the gospel now, by the disposition, not of angels, but of the Holy Ghost,—not with the sound of a trumpet, but, which was more strange, in the gift of tongues, and yet they did not embrace it. They would not yield to the plainest demonstrations, any more than their fathers before them did, for they were resolved not to comply with God either in his law or in his gospel.

We have reason to think Stephen had a great deal more to say, and would have said it if they would have suffered him; but they were wicked and unreasonable men with whom he had to do, that could no more hear reason than they could speak it.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58 And cast him out of the city, and

stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

We have here the death of the first martyr of the Christian church, and there is in this story a lively instance of the outrage and fury of the persecutors (such as we may expect to meet with if we are called out to suffer for Christ), and of the courage and comfort of the persecuted, that are thus called out. Here is hell in its fire and darkness, and heaven in its light and brightness; and these serve as foils to set off each other. It is not here said that the votes of the council were taken upon his case, and that by the majority he was found guilty, and then condemned and ordered to be stoned to death, according to the law, as a blasphemer; but, it is likely, so it was, and that it was not by the violence of the people, without order of the council, that he was put to death; for here is the usual ceremony of regular executions—he was cast out of the city, and the hands of the witnesses were first upon him.

Let us observe here the wonderful discomposure of the spirits of his enemies and persecutors, and the wonderful composure of his spirit.

I. See the strength of corruption in the persecutors of Stephen—malice in perfection, hell itself broken loose, men become incarnate devils, and the serpent's seed spitting their venom.

1. When they heard these things they were cut to the heart (v. 54), *διεπείσθη*, the same word that is used Heb. xi. 37, and translated they were *sawn asunder*. They were put to as much torture in their minds as ever the martyrs were put to in their bodies. They were filled with indignation at the unanswerable arguments that Stephen urged for their conviction, and that they could find nothing to say against them. They were not pricked to the heart with sorrow, as those were ch. ii. 37, but cut to the heart with rage and fury, as they themselves were, ch. v. 33. Stephen rebuked them sharply, as Paul expresses it (Tit. i. 13), *ἀποτόμως*—*cuttingly*, for they were cut to the heart by the reproof. Note, Rejecters of the gospel and opposers of it are really tormentors to themselves. Enmity to God is a heart-cutting thing; faith and love are heart-healing. When they heard how he that looked like an angel before he began his discourse talked like an angel, like a messenger from heaven, before he concluded it, they were like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord (Isa. li. 20), despairing to run down



a cause so bravely pleaded, and yet resolved not to yield to it.

2. They *gnashed upon him with their teeth*. This denotes, (1.) Great malice and rage against him. Job complained of his enemy that he *gnashed upon him with his teeth*, Job xvi. 9. The language of this was, *Oh that we had of his flesh to eat!* Job xxxi. 31. They *grinned at him*, as dogs at those they are enraged at; and therefore Paul, cautioning against those of the circumcision, says, *Beware of dogs*, Phil. iii. 2. Enmity at the saints turns men into brute beasts. (2.) Great vexation within themselves; they fretted to see in him such manifest tokens of a divine power and presence, and it vexed them to the heart. *The wicked shall see it and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth and melt away*, Ps. cxii. 10. Gnashing with the teeth is often used to express the horror and torments of the damned. Those that have the malice of hell cannot but have with it some of the pains of hell.

3. They *cried out with a loud voice* (v. 57), to irritate and excite one another, and to drown the noise of the clamours of their own and one another's consciences; when he said, *I see heaven opened*, they cried with a loud voice, that he might not be heard to speak. Note, It is very common for a righteous cause, particularly the righteous cause of Christ's religion, to be attempted to be run down by noise and clamour; what is wanting in reason is made up in tumult, and *the cry of him that ruleth among fools, while the words of the wise are heard in quiet*. They cried with a loud voice, as soldiers when they are going to engage in battle, mustering up all their spirit and vigour for this desperate encounter.

4. They *stopped their ears*, that they might not hear their own noisiness; or perhaps under pretence that they could not bear to hear his blasphemies. As Caiaphas rent his clothes when Christ said, *Hereafter you shall see the Son of man coming in glory* (Matt. xxvi. 64, 65), so here these *stopped their ears* when Stephen said, *I now see the Son of man standing in glory*, both pretending that what was spoken was not to be heard with patience. Their stopping their ears was, (1.) A manifest specimen of their wilful obstinacy; they were resolved they would not hear what had a tendency to convince them, which was what the prophets often complained of: they were *like the deaf adder, that will not hear the voice of the charmer*, Ps. lvi. 4, 5. (2.) It was a fatal omen of that judicial hardness to which God would give them up. They stopped their ears, and then God, in a way of righteous judgment, stopped them. This was the work that was now in doing with the unbelieving Jews: *Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy*; thus was Stephen's character of them answered, *You uncircumcised in heart and ears*.

5. They *ran upon him with one accord*—the people and the elders of the people,

judges, prosecutors, witnesses, and spectators, they all flew upon him, as beasts upon their prey. See how violent they were, and in what haste—they ran upon him, though there was no danger of his outrunning them; and see how unanimous they were in this evil thing—they ran upon him *with one accord*, one and all, hoping thereby to terrify him, and put him into confusion, envying him his composure and comfort in soul, with which he wonderfully enjoyed himself in the midst of this hurry; they did all they could to ruffle him.

6. They *cast him out of the city, and stoned him*, as if he were not worthy to live in Jerusalem; nay, not worthy to live in this world, pretending herein to execute the law of Moses (Lev. xxiv. 16), *He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death, all the congregation shall certainly stone him*. And thus they had put Christ to death, when this same court had found him guilty of blasphemy, but that, for his greater ignominy, they were desirous he should be crucified, and God overruled it for the fulfilling of the scripture. The fury with which they managed the execution is intimated in this: they cast him out of the city, as if they could not bear the sight of him; they treated him as an anathema, as the offscouring of all things. The witnesses against him were the leaders in the execution, according to the law (Deut. xvii. 7), *The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him, to put him to death*, and particularly in the case of blasphemy, Lev. xxiv. 14; Deut. xiii. 9. Thus they were to confirm their testimony. Now, the stoning of a man being a laborious piece of work, the witnesses took off their upper garments, that they might not hang in their way, *and they laid them down at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul*, now a pleased spectator of this tragedy. It is the first time we find mention of his name; we shall know it and love it better when we find it changed to *Paul*, and him changed from a persecutor into a preacher. This little instance of his agency in Stephen's death he afterwards reflected upon with regret (ch. xxii. 20) *I kept the raiment of those that slew him*.

II. See the strength of grace in Stephen, and the wonderful instances of God's favour to him, and working in him. As his persecutors were full of Satan, so was he *full of the Holy Ghost*, fuller than ordinary, anointed with fresh oil for the combat, that, as the day, so might the strength be. Upon this account those are *blessed who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, that the Spirit of God and of glory rests upon them*, 1 Pet. iv. 14. When he was chosen to public service, he was described to be a man *full of the Holy Ghost* (ch. vi. 5), and now he is called out to martyrdom he has still the same character. Note, Those that are full of the Holy Ghost are fit for any thing, either to act for Christ or to suffer for him. And those whom God calls out to difficult services for his name he



will qualify for those services, and carry comfortably through them, by filling them with the Holy Ghost, that, as their afflictions for Christ abound, their consolation in him may yet more abound, and then *none of these things move them*. Now here we have a remarkable communion between this blessed martyr and the blessed Jesus in this critical moment. When the followers of Christ are for his sake *killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter*, does this separate them from the love of Christ? Does he love them the less? Do they love him the less? No, by no means; and so it appears by this narrative, in which we may observe,

1. Christ's gracious manifestation of himself to Stephen, both for his comfort and for his honour, in the midst of his sufferings. When they were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth, ready to eat him up, then he had a view of the glory of Christ sufficient to fill him with joy unspeakable, which was intended not only for his encouragement, but for the support and comfort of all God's suffering servants in all ages.

(1.) He, *being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven*, v. 55. [1.] Thus he looked above the power and fury of his persecutors, and did as it were despise them, and laugh them to scorn, as the daughter of Zion, Isa. xxxvii. 22. They had their eyes fixed upon him, full of malice and cruelty; but he looked up to heaven, and never minded them, was so taken up with the eternal life now in prospect that he seemed to have no manner of concern for the natural life now at stake. Instead of looking about him, to see either which way he was in danger or which way he might make his escape, he looks up to heaven; thence only comes his help, and thitherward his way is still open; though they compass him about on every side, they cannot interrupt his intercourse with heaven. Note, A believing regard to God and the upper world will be of great use to us, to set us above the fear of man; for as far as we are under the influence of that fear we *forget the Lord our Maker*, Isa. li. 13. [2.] Thus he directed his sufferings to the glory of God, to the honour of Christ, and did as it were appeal to heaven concerning them (Lord, for thy sake I suffer this) and express his earnest expectation that Christ should be magnified in his body. Now that he was ready to be offered he looks up stedfastly to heaven, as one willing to offer himself. [3.] Thus he lifted up his soul with his eyes to God in the heavens, in pious ejaculations, calling upon God for wisdom and grace to carry him through this trial in a right manner. God has promised that he will be with his servants whom he calls out to suffer for him; but he will for this be sought unto. He is nigh unto them, but it is *in that for which they call upon him*. Is

*any afflicted? Let him pray*. [4.] Thus he breathed after the heavenly country, to which he saw the fury of his persecutors would presently send him. It is good for dying saints to look up stedfastly to heaven: "Yonder is the place whither death will carry my better part, and then, *O death! where is thy sting?*" [5.] Thus he made it to appear that he was full of the Holy Ghost; for, wherever the Spirit of grace dwells, and works, and reigns, he directs the eye of the soul upward. Those that are full of the Holy Ghost will look up stedfastly to heaven, for there their heart is. [6.] Thus he put himself into a posture to receive the following manifestation of the divine glory and grace. If we expect to hear from heaven, we must look up stedfastly to heaven.

(2.) He saw the glory of God (v. 55); for *he saw*, in order to this, *the heavens opened*, v. 56. Some think his eyes were strengthened, and the sight of them so raised above its natural pitch, by a supernatural power, that he saw into the third heavens, though at so vast a distance, as Moses's sight was enlarged to see the whole land of Canaan. Others think it was a representation of the glory of God set before his eyes, as, before, Isaiah and Ezekiel; heaven did as it were come down to him, as Rev. xxi. 2. The heavens were opened, to give him a view of the happiness he was going to, that he might, in prospect of it, go cheerfully through death, so great a death. Would we by faith look up stedfastly, we might see the heavens opened by the mediation of Christ, the veil being rent, and a new and living way laid open for us into the holiest. The heaven is opened for the settling of a correspondence between God and men, that his favours and blessings may come down to us, and our prayers and praises may go up to him. We may also see the glory of God, as far as he has revealed it in his word, and the sight of this will carry us through all the terrors of sufferings and death.

(3.) He *saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God* (v. 55), *the Son of man*, so it is v. 56. Jesus, being the Son of man, having taken our nature with him to heaven, and being there clothed with a body, might be seen with bodily eyes, and so Stephen saw him. When the Old-Testament prophets saw the glory of God it was attended with angels. The Shechinah or divine presence in Isaiah's vision was attended with seraphim, in Ezekiel's vision with cherubim, both signifying the angels, the ministers of God's providence. But here no mention is made of the angels, though they surround the throne and the Lamb; instead of them Stephen sees Jesus at the right hand of God, the great Mediator of God's grace, from whom more glory redounds to God than from all the ministration of the holy angels. The glory of God shines brightest in the face of Jesus Christ; for there shines the glory of

his grace, which is the most illustrious instance of his glory. God appears more glorious with Jesus standing at his right hand than with millions of angels about him. Now, [1.] Here is a proof of the exaltation of Christ to the Father's right hand; the apostles saw him ascend, but they did not see him sit down, *A cloud received him out of their sight*. We are told that he sat down on the right hand of God; but was he ever seen there? Yes, Stephen saw him there, and was abundantly satisfied with the sight. He saw Jesus at the right hand of God, denoting both his transcendent dignity and his sovereign dominion, his uncontrollable ability and his universal agency; whatever God's right hand gives to us, or receives from us, or does concerning us, it is by him; for he is his right hand. [2.] He is usually said to sit there; but Stephen sees him standing there, as one more than ordinarily concerned at present for his suffering servant; he stood up as a judge to plead his cause against his persecutors; he is *raised up out of his holy habitation* (Zech. ii. 13), *comes out of his place to punish*, Isa. xxvi. 21. He stands ready to receive him and crown him, and in the mean time to give him a prospect of the joy set before him. [3.] This was intended for the encouragement of Stephen. He sees Christ is for him, and then no matter who is against him. When our Lord Jesus was in his agony an angel appeared to him, strengthening him; but Stephen had Christ himself appearing to him. Note, Nothing so comfortable to dying saints, nor so animating to suffering saints, as to see Jesus at the right hand of God; and, blessed be God, by faith we may see him there.

(4.) He told those about him what he saw (v. 56): *Behold, I see the heavens opened*. That which was a cordial to him ought to have been a conviction to them, and a caution to them to take heed of proceeding against one upon whom heaven thus smiled; and therefore what he saw he declared, let them make what use they pleased of it. If some were exasperated by it, others perhaps might be wrought upon to consider this Jesus whom they persecuted, and to believe in him.

2. Stephen's pious addresses to Jesus Christ. The manifestation of God's glory to him did not set him above praying, but rather set him upon it: *They stoned Stephen, calling upon God*, v. 59. Though he called upon God, and by that showed himself to be a true-born Israelite, yet they proceeded to stone him, not considering how dangerous it is to fight against those who have an interest in heaven. Though they stoned him, yet he called upon God; nay, therefore he called upon him. Note, It is the comfort of those who are unjustly hated and persecuted by men that they have a God to go to, a God all-sufficient to call upon. Men stop their ears, as they did here (v. 57), but God does

not. Stephen was now cast out of the city, but he was not cast out from his God. He was now taking his leave of the world, and therefore calls upon God; for we must do this as long as we live. Note, It is good to die praying; then we need help—strength we never had, to do a work we never did—and how can we fetch in that help and strength but by prayer? Two short prayers Stephen offered up to God in his dying moments, and in them as it were breathed out his soul:—

(1.) Here is a prayer for himself: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*. Thus Christ had himself resigned his spirit immediately into the hands of the Father. We are here taught to resign ours into the hands of Christ as Mediator, by him to be recommended to the Father. Stephen saw Jesus standing at the Father's right hand, and he thus calls to him: "Blessed Jesus, do that for me now which thou standest there to do for all thine, receive my departing spirit into thy hand." Observe, [1.] The soul is the man, and our great concern, living and dying, must be about our souls. Stephen's body was to be miserably broken and shattered, and overwhelmed with a shower of stones, the earthly house of this tabernacle violently beaten down and abused; but, however it goes with that, "Lord," saith he, "let my spirit be safe; let it go well with my poor soul." Thus, while we live, our care should be that though the body be starved or stripped the soul may be fed and clothed, though the body lie in pain the soul may dwell at ease; and, when we die, that though the body be thrown by as a despised broken vessel, and a vessel in which there is no pleasure, yet the soul may be presented a vessel of honour, that God may be the strength of the heart and its portion, though the flesh fail. [2.] Our Lord Jesus is God, to whom we are to seek, and in whom we are to confide and comfort ourselves living and dying. Stephen here prays to Christ, and so must we; for it is the will of God that all men should thus *honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*. It is Christ we are to commit ourselves to, who alone is able to keep what we commit to him against that day; it is necessary that we have an eye to Christ when we come to die, for there is no venturing into another world but under his conduct, no living comforts in dying moments but what are fetched from him. [3.] Christ's receiving our spirits at death is the great thing we are to be careful about, and to comfort ourselves with. We ought to be in care about this while we live, that Christ may receive our spirits when we die; for, if he reject and disown them, whither will they betake themselves? How can they escape being a prey to the roaring lion? To him therefore we must commit them daily, to be ruled and sanctified, and made meet for heaven, and then, and not otherwise, he will receive them. And, if this has been our care



while we live, it may be our comfort when we come to die, that we shall be received into everlasting habitations.

(2.) Here is a prayer for his persecutors, v. 60.

[1.] The circumstances of this prayer are observable; for it seems to have been offered up with something more of solemnity than the former. *First*, He *knelt down*, which was an expression of his humility in prayer. *Secondly*, He *cried with a loud voice*, which was an expression of his importunity. But why should he thus show more humility and importunity in this request than in the former? Why, none could doubt of his being in good earnest in his prayers for himself, and therefore there he needed not to use such outward expressions of it; but in his prayer for his enemies, because that is so much against the grain of corrupt nature, it was requisite he should give proofs of his being in earnest.

[2.] The prayer itself: *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*. Herein he followed the example of his dying Master, who prayed thus for his persecutors, *Father, forgive them*; and set an example to all following sufferers in the cause of Christ thus to pray for those that persecute them. Prayer may preach. This did so to those who stoned Stephen, and he knelt down that they might take notice he was going to pray, and cried with a loud voice that they might take notice of what he said, and might learn, *First*, That what they did was a sin, a great sin, which, if divine mercy and grace did not prevent, would be laid to their charge, to their everlasting confusion. *Secondly*, That, notwithstanding their malice and fury against him, he was in charity with them, and was so far from desiring that God would avenge his death upon them that it was his hearty prayer to God that it might not in any degree be laid to their charge. A sad reckoning there would be for it. If they did not repent, it would certainly be laid to their charge; but he, for his part, did not desire the woeful day. Let them take notice of this, and, when their thoughts were cool, surely they would not easily forgive themselves for putting him to death who could so easily forgive them. *The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul*, Prov. xxix. 10. *Thirdly*, That, though the sin was very heinous, yet they must not despair of the pardon of it upon their repentance. If they would lay it to their hearts, God would not lay it to their charge. "Do you think," saith St. Austin, "that Paul heard Stephen pray this prayer? It is likely he did and ridiculed it then (*audivit subsannans, sed irritis—he heard with scorn*), but afterwards he had the benefit of it, and fared the better for it."

3. His expiring with this. *When he had said this, he fell asleep*; or, as he was saying this, the blow came that was mortal. Note,

Death is but a sleep to good people; not the sleep of the soul (Stephen had given that up into Christ's hand), but the sleep of the body; it is its rest from all its griefs and toils; it is perfect ease from toil and pain. Stephen died as much in a hurry as ever any man did, and yet, when he died, he fell asleep. He applied himself to his dying work with as much composure of mind as if he had been going to sleep; it was but closing his eyes, and dying. Observe, He fell asleep when he was praying for his persecutors; it is expressed as if he thought he could not die in peace till he had done this. It contributes very much to our dying comfortably to die in charity with all men; we are then found of Christ in peace; let not the sun of life go down upon our wrath. He fell asleep; the vulgar Latin adds, *in the Lord*, in the embraces of his love. If he thus sleep, he shall do well; he shall awake again in the morning of the resurrection.

#### CHAP. VIII.

In this chapter we have an account of the persecutions of the Christians, and the propagating of Christianity thereby. It was strange, but very true, that the disciples of Christ the more they were afflicted the more they multiplied. 1. Here is the church suffering; upon the occasion of putting Stephen to death a very sharp storm arose, which forced many from Jerusalem, ver. 1-3. 2. Here is the church spreading by the ministry of Philip and others that were dispersed upon that occasion. We have here, 1. The gospel brought to Samaria, preached there (ver. 4, 5), embraced there (ver. 6-8), even by Simon Magus (ver. 9-13); the gift of the Holy Ghost conferred upon some of the believing Samaritans by the imposition of the hands of Peter and John (ver. 14-17); and the severe rebuke given by Peter to Simon Magus for offering money for a power to bestow that gift, ver. 18-25. 2. The gospel sent to Ethiopia, by the council, a person of quality of that country. He is returning home in his chariot from Jerusalem, ver. 26-28. Philip is sent to him, and in his chariot preaches Christ to him (ver. 29-35), baptizes him upon his profession of the Christian faith (ver. 36-38), and then leaves him, ver. 39, 40. Those in different ways and methods the gospel was dispersed among the nations, and, one way or other, "Have they not all heard?"

AND Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

In these verses we have,

1. Something more concerning Stephen and his death; how people stood affected to it—variously, as generally in such cases, according to men's different sentiments of things. Christ had said to his disciples, when he was parting with them (John xvi. 20), *You shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice*. Accordingly here is, 1. Stephen's death rejoiced in by one—by many, no doubt, but by one in particular, and that was Saul, who was afterwards called Paul; he was consenting to his death,



συνεδοκῶν—he consented to it with delight (so the word signifies); he was pleased with it. He fed his eyes with this bloody spectacle, in hopes it would put a stop to the growth of Christianity. We have reason to think that Paul ordered Luke to insert this, for shame to himself, and glory to free grace. Thus he owns himself guilty of the blood of Stephen, and aggravates it with this, that he did not do it with regret and reluctance, but with delight and a full satisfaction, like those who not only *do such things, but have pleasure in those that do them.* 2. Stephen's death bewailed by others (v. 2)—*devout men*, which some understand of those that were properly so called, *proselytes*, one of whom Stephen himself probably was. Or, it may be taken more largely; some of the church that were more devout and zealous than the rest went and gathered up the poor crushed and broken remains, to which they gave a decent interment, probably in the *field of blood*, which was bought some time ago to bury strangers in. They buried him solemnly, and made great lamentation over him. Though his death was of great advantage to himself, and great service to the church, yet they bewailed it as a general loss, so well qualified was he for the service, and so likely to be useful both as a deacon and as a disputant. It is a bad symptom if, when such men are taken away, it is not laid to heart. Those devout men paid these their last respects to Stephen, (1.) To show that they were not ashamed of the cause for which he suffered, nor afraid of the wrath of those that were enemies to it; for, though they now triumph, the cause is a righteous cause, and will be at last a victorious one. (2.) To show the great value and esteem they had for this faithful servant of Jesus Christ, this first martyr for the gospel, whose memory shall always be precious to them, notwithstanding the ignominy of his death. They study to do honour to him upon whom God put honour. (3.) To testify their belief and hope of the *resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.*

II. An account of this persecution of the church, which begins upon the martyrdom of Stephen. When the fury of the Jews ran with such violence, and to such a height, against Stephen, it could not quickly either stop itself or spend itself. The bloody are often in scripture called *blood-thirsty*; for when they have tasted blood they thirst for more. One would have thought Stephen's dying prayers and dying comforts should have overcome them, and melted them into a better opinion of Christians and Christianity; but it seems they did not: the persecution goes on; for they were more exasperated when they saw they could prevail nothing, and, as if they hoped to be too hard for God himself, they resolve to follow their blow; and perhaps, because they were none of them struck dead upon the place for stoning Stephen, their hearts were the more fully set in

them to do evil. Perhaps the disciples were also the more emboldened to dispute against them as Stephen did, seeing how triumphantly he finished his course, which would provoke them so much the more. Observe,

1. Against whom this persecution was raised: It was *against the church in Jerusalem*, which is no sooner planted than it is persecuted, as Christ often intimated that tribulation and persecution would arise *because of the word.* And Christ had particularly foretold that Jerusalem would soon be made too hot for his followers, for that city had been famous for killing the prophets and stoning those that were sent to it, Matt. xxiii. 37. It should seem that in this persecution many were put to death, for Paul owns that at this time he persecuted this way *unto the death* (ch. xxi. 4), and (ch. xxvi. 10) that *when they were put to death he gave his voice against them.*

2. Who was an active man in it; none so zealous, so busy, as Saul, a young Pharisee, v. 3. As for Saul (who had been twice mentioned before, and now again for a notorious persecutor) *he made havoc of the church*; he did all he could to lay it waste and ruin it; he cared not what mischief he did to the disciples of Christ, nor knew when to stop. He aimed at no less than the cutting off of the gospel Israel, that the name of it should be no more in remembrance, Ps. lxxxiii. 4. He was the fittest tool the chief priests could find out to serve their purposes; he was informer-general against the disciples, a messenger of the great council to be employed in searching for meetings, and seizing all that were suspected to favour that way. Saul was bred a scholar, a gentleman, and yet did not think it below him to be employed in the vilest work of that kind. (1.) He *entered into every house*, making no difficulty of breaking open doors, night or day, and having a force attending him for that purpose. He entered into every house where they used to hold their meetings, or every house that had any Christians in it, or was thought to have. No man could be secure in his own house, though it was his castle. (2.) He *haled*, with the utmost contempt and cruelty, both men and women, dragged them along the streets, without any regard to the tenderness of the weaker sex; he stooped so low as to take cognizance of the meanest that were leavened with the gospel, so extremely bigoted was he. (3.) He committed them to prison, in order to their being tried and put to death, unless they would renounce Christ; and some, we find, were compelled by him to blaspheme, ch. xxvi. 11.

3. What was the effect of this persecution: *They were all scattered abroad* (v. 1), not all the believers, but all the preachers, who were principally struck at, and against whom warrants were issued out to take them up. They, remembering our Master's rule (*when they persecute you in one city, flee to another*), dis-



persed themselves by agreement *throughout the regions of Judea and of Samaria*; not so much for fear of sufferings (for Judea and Samaria were not so far off from Jerusalem but that, if they made a public appearance there, as they determined to do, their persecutors' power would soon reach them there), but because they looked upon this as an intimation of Providence to them to scatter. Their work was pretty well done in Jerusalem, and now it was time to think of the necessities of other places; for their Master had told them that they must be his witnesses in Jerusalem first, and then *in all Judea and in Samaria*, and then *to the uttermost part of the earth* (ch. i. 8), and this method they observe. Though persecution may not drive us off from our work, yet it may send us, as a hint of Providence, to work elsewhere. The preachers were all scattered *except the apostles*, who, probably, were directed by the Spirit to continue at Jerusalem yet for some time, they being, by the special providence of God, screened from the storm, and by the special grace of God enabled to face the storm. They tarried at Jerusalem, that they might be ready to go where their assistance was most needed by the other preachers that were sent to break the ice; as Christ ordered his disciples to go to those places where he himself designed to go, Luke x. 1. The apostles continued longer together at Jerusalem than one would have thought, considering the command and commission given them, *to go into all the world, and to disciple all nations*. See ch. xv. 6; Gal. i. 17. But what was done by the evangelists whom they sent forth was reckoned as done by them.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city. 9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: 10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11 And to him they had regard, because

that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Samson's riddle is here again unriddled: *Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness*. The persecution that was designed to extirpate the church was by the overruling providence of God made an occasion of the enlargement of it. Christ had said, *I am come to send fire on the earth*; and they thought, by scattering those who were kindled with that fire, to have put it out, but instead of this they did but help to spread it.

I. Here is a general account of what was done by them all (v. 4): *They went every where, preaching the word*. They did not go to hide themselves for fear of suffering, no, nor to show themselves as proud of their sufferings; but they went up and down to scatter the knowledge of Christ in every place where they were scattered. They went every where, into the way of the Gentiles, and the cities of the Samaritans, which before they were forbidden to go into, Matt. x. 5. They did not keep together in a body, though this might have been a strength to them; but they scattered into all parts, not to take their ease, but to find out work. They went *evangelizing* the world, preaching the word of the gospel; it was this which filled them and which they endeavoured to fill the country with, those of them that were preachers in their preaching, and others in their common converse. They were now in a country where they were no strangers, for Christ and his disciples had conversed much in the regions of Judea; so that they had a foundation laid there for them to build upon; and it would be requisite to let the people there know what that doctrine which Jesus had preached there some time ago was come to, and that it was not lost and forgotten, as perhaps they were made to believe.

II. A particular account of what was done by Philip. We shall hear of the progress and success of others of them afterwards (ch. xi. 19), but here must attend the motions of Philip, not Philip the apostle, but Philip the deacon, who was chosen and ordained to serve tables, but having *used the office of a deacon well he purchased to himself a good degree, and great boldness in the faith*, 1 Tim. iii. 13. Stephen was advanced to the degree of a martyr, Philip to the degree of an evangelist, which when he entered upon, being

obliged by it to *give himself to the word and prayer*, he was, no doubt, discharged from the office of a deacon; for how could he serve tables at Jerusalem, which by that office he was obliged to do, when he was preaching in Samaria? And it is probable that two others were chosen in the room of Stephen and Philip. Now observe,

1. What wonderful success Philip had in his preaching, and what reception he met with.

(1.) The place he chose was the city of Samaria, the head city of Samaria, the metropolis of that country, which stood where the city of Samaria had formerly stood, of the building of which we read, 1 Kings xvi. 24, now called *Sebaste*. Some think it was the same with Sychem or Sychar, that city of Samaria where Christ was, John iv. 5. Many of that city then believed in Christ, though he did no miracle among them (v. 39, 41), and now Philip, three years after, carries on the work then begun. The Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans; but Christ sent his gospel to slay all enmities, and particularly that between the Jews and the Samaritans, by making them one in his church.

(2.) The doctrine he preached was Christ; for he determined to know nothing else. He *preached Christ to them; he proclaimed Christ to them* (so the word signifies), as a king, when he comes to the crown, is proclaimed throughout his dominions. The Samaritans had an expectation of the Messiah's coming, as appears by John iv. 25. Now Philip tells them that he is come, and that the Samaritans are welcome to him. Ministers' business is to preach Christ—Christ, and him crucified—Christ, and him glorified.

(3.) The proofs he produced for the confirmation of his doctrine were miracles, v. 6. To convince them that he had his commission from heaven (and therefore not only they might venture upon what he said, but they were bound to yield to it), he shows them this broad seal of heaven annexed to it, which the God of truth would never put to a lie. The miracles were undeniable; they heard and saw the miracles which he did. They heard the commanding words he spoke, and saw the amazing effects of them immediately; that he spoke, and it was done. And the nature of the miracles was such as suited the intention of his commission, and gave light and lustre to it. [1.] He was sent to break the power of Satan; and, in token of this, unclean spirits, being charged in the name of the Lord Jesus to remove, *came out of many that were possessed with them*, v. 7. As far as the gospel prevails, Satan is forced to quit his hold of men and his interest in them, and then those are restored to themselves, and to their right mind again, who, while he kept possession, were distracted. Wherever the gospel gains the admission and submission it ought to have, evil spirits are dislodged,

and particularly *unclean spirits*, all inclinations to the lusts of the flesh, which war against the soul; for God has called us from uncleanness to holiness, 1 Thess. iv. 7. This was signified by the casting of these unclean spirits out of the bodies of people, who, it is here said, *came out crying with a loud voice*, which signifies that they came out with great reluctance, and sorely against their wills, but were forced to acknowledge themselves overcome by a superior power, Mark i. 26; iii. 11; ix. 26. [2.] He was sent to heal the minds of men, to cure a distempered world, and to put it into a good state of health; and, in token of this, *many that were taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed*. Those distempers are specified that were most difficult to be cured by the course of nature (that the miraculous cure might be the more illustrious), and those that were most expressive of the disease of sin and that moral impotency which the souls of men labour under as to the service of God. The grace of God in the gospel is designed for the healing of those that are spiritually lame and paralytic, and cannot help themselves, Rom. v. 6.

(4.) The acceptance which Philip's doctrine, thus proved, met with in Samaria (v. 6): *The people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spoke*, induced thereto by the miracles which served at first to gain attention, and so by degrees to gain assent. There then begin to be some hopes of people when they begin to take notice of what is said to them concerning the things of their souls and eternity—when they begin to give heed to the word of God, as those that are well pleased to hear it, desirous to understand and remember it, and that look upon themselves as concerned in it. The common people gave heed to Philip, *οἱ ὄχλοι*—*a multitude of them*, not here and there one, but with one accord; they were all of a mind, that it was fit the doctrine of the gospel should be enquired into, and an impartial hearing given to it.

(5.) The satisfaction they had in attending on, and attending to, Philip's preaching, and the success it had with many of them (v. 8) *There was great joy in that city*; for (v. 12) *they believed Philip, and were baptized into the faith of Christ*, the generality of them, *both men and women*. Observe, [1.] Philip preached *the things concerning the kingdom of God*, the constitution of that kingdom, the laws and ordinances of it, the liberties and privileges of it, and the obligations we are all under to be the loyal subjects of that kingdom; and he preached the name of Jesus Christ, as king of that kingdom—his name, *which is above every name*. He preached it up in its commanding power and influence—all that by which he has made himself known. [2.] The people not only gave heed to what he said, but at length believed it, were fully convinced that it was of God and not of men, and gave up themselves to the direction and



government of it. As to this mountain, on which they had hitherto worshipped God, and placed a great deal of religion in it, they were now as much weaned from it as ever they had been wedded to it, and become *the true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth*, and in the name of Christ, the true temple, John iv. 20—23. [3.] When they believed, without scruple (though they were Samaritans) and without delay *they were baptized*, openly professed the Christian faith, promised to adhere to it, and then, by washing them with water, were solemnly admitted into the communion of the Christian church, and owned as brethren by the disciples. *Men* only were capable of being admitted into the Jewish church by circumcision; but, to show that *in Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female* (Gal. iii. 28), but both are alike welcome to him, the initiating ordinance is such as women are capable of, for they are numbered with God's spiritual Israel, though not with Israel according to the flesh, Num. i. 2. And hence it is easily gathered that women are to be admitted to the Lord's supper, though it does not appear that there were any among those to whom it was first administered. [4.] This occasioned great joy; each one rejoiced for himself, as he in the parable who *found the treasure hid in the field*; and they all rejoiced for the benefit hereby brought to their city, and that it came without opposition, which it would scarcely have done if Samaria had been within the jurisdiction of the chief priests. Note, The bringing of the gospel to any place is just matter of joy, of great joy, to that place. Hence the spreading of the gospel in the world is often prophesied of in the Old Testament as the diffusing of joy among the nations: *Let the nations be glad and sing for joy*, Ps. lxxvii. 4; 1 Thes. i. 6: The gospel of Christ does not make men melancholy, but fills them with joy, if it be received as it should be; for it is *glad tidings of great joy to all people*, Luke ii. 10.

2. What there was in particular at this city of Samaria that made the success of the gospel there more than ordinarily wonderful.

(1.) That Simon Magus had been busy there, and had gained a great interest among the people, and *yet they believed the things that Philip spoke*. To unlearn that which is bad proves many times a harder task than to learn that which is good. These Samaritans, though they were not idolaters as the Gentiles, nor prejudiced against the gospel by traditions received from their fathers, yet had of late been drawn to follow Simon, a conjurer (for so *Magus* signifies) who made a mighty noise among them, and had strangely bewitched them. We are told,

[1.] How strong the delusion of Satan was by which they were brought into the interests of this great deceiver. He had been for some time, nay, for a long time, in this city, *using sorceries*; perhaps he came there

by the instigation of the devil, soon after our Saviour had been there, to undo what he had been doing there; for it was always Satan's way to crush a good work in its bud and infancy, 2 Cor. xi. 3; 1 Thes. iii. 5. Now,

First, Simon assumed to himself that which was considerable: *He gave out that he himself was some great one*, and would have all people to believe so and to pay him respect accordingly; and then, as to every thing else, they might do as they pleased. He had no design to reform their lives, nor improve their worship and devotion, only to make them believe that he was, *τις μέγας—some divine person*. Justin Martyr says that he would be worshipped as *πρωτον θεόν—the chief god*. He gave out himself to be *the Son of God, the Messiah*, so some think; or to be an angel, or a prophet. Perhaps he was uncertain within himself what title of honour to pretend to; but he would be thought *some great one*. Pride, ambition, and an affectation of grandeur, have always been the cause of abundance of mischief both to the world and to the church.

Secondly, The people ascribed to him what he pleased. 1. *They all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest*, both young and old, both poor and rich, both governors and governed. *To him they had regard* (v. 10, 11), and perhaps the more because the time fixed for the coming of the Messiah had now expired, which had raised a general expectation of the appearing of some great one about this time. Probably he was a native of their country, and therefore they embraced him the more cheerfully, that by giving honour to him they might reflect it upon themselves. 2. They said of him, *This man is the great power of God—the power of God, that great power* (so it might be read), that power which made the world. See how ignorant inconsiderate people mistake that which is done by the power of Satan, as if it were done by the power of God. Thus, in the Gentile world, devils pass for deities; and in the antichristian kingdom *all the world wonders after a beast*, to whom the dragon gives his power, and *who opens his mouth in blasphemy against God*, Rev. xiii. 2—5. 3. They were brought to it by his sorceries: *He bewitched the people of Samaria* (v. 9), *bewitched them with sorceries* (v. 11), that is, either, (1.) By his magic arts *he bewitched the minds of the people*, at least some of them, who drew in others. Satan, by God's permission, filled their hearts to follow Simon. *O foolish Galatians, saith Paul, who hath bewitched you?* Gal. iii. 1. These people are said to be bewitched by Simon, because they were so strangely infatuated to believe a lie. Or, (2.) By his magic arts he did many signs and lying wonders, which seemed to be miracles, but really were not so: like those of the magicians of Egypt, and those of the man of sin, 2 Thess. ii. 9. When they knew no better, they were influenced by his sorceries; but, when



they were acquainted with Philip's real miracles, they saw plainly that the one was real and the other a sham, and that there was as much difference as between Aaron's rod and those of the magicians. *What is the chaff to the wheat?* Jer. xxiii. 28.

Thus, notwithstanding the influence Simon Magus had had upon them, and the unwillingness there generally is in people to own themselves in an error, and to retract it, yet, when they saw the difference between Simon and Philip, they quitted Simon, gave heed no longer to him, but to Philip: and thus you see,

[2.] How strong the power of Divine grace is, by which they were brought to Christ, who is truth itself, and was, as I may say, the great undeceiver. By that grace working with the word those that had been led captive by Satan *were brought into obedience to Christ*. Where Satan, as a *strong man armed*, kept possession of the palace, and thought himself safe, Christ, as a *stronger than he*, dispossessed him, and *divided the spoil*; *led captivity captive*, and made those the trophies of his victory whom the devil had triumphed over. Let us not despair of the worst, when even those whom Simon Magus had bewitched were brought to believe.

(2.) Here is another thing yet more wonderful, that Simon Magus himself became a convert to the faith of Christ, in show and profession, for a time. *Is Saul also among the prophets?* Yes (v. 13), *Simon himself believed also*. He was convinced that Philip preached a true doctrine, because he saw it confirmed by real miracles, of which he was the better able to judge because he was conscious to himself of the trick of his own pretended ones. [1.] The present conviction went so far that *he was baptized*, was admitted, as other believers were, into the church by baptism; and we have no reason to think that Philip did amiss in baptizing him, no, nor in baptizing him quickly. Though he had been a very wicked man, a sorcerer, a pretender to divine honours, yet, upon his solemn profession of repentance for his sin and faith in Jesus Christ, he was baptized. For, as great wickedness before conversion keeps not true penitents from the benefits of God's grace, so neither should it keep professing ones from church-fellowship. Prodigals, when they return, must be joyfully welcomed home, though we cannot be sure but that they will play the prodigal again. Nay, though he was now but a hypocrite, and really in the *gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity* all this while, and would soon have been found to be so if he had been tried awhile, yet Philip baptized him; for it is God's prerogative to know the heart. The church and its ministers must go by a judgment of charity, as far as there is room for it. It is a maxim in the law, *Donec contrarium patet, semper præsumitur meliori parti*—*We must hope the best as long as we can*. And it is a maxim in the discipline of the

church, *De secretis non judicat ecclesia*—*The secrets of the heart God only judges*. [2.] The present conviction lasted so long that he continued with Philip. Though afterwards he apostatized from Christianity, yet not quickly. He courted Philip's acquaintance and now he that had given out himself to be some great one is content to sit at the feet of a preacher of the gospel. Even bad men, very bad, may sometimes be in a good frame, very good; and those whose hearts still go after their covetousness may possibly not only come before God as his people come but continue with them. [3.] The present conviction was wrought and kept up by the miracles; he wondered to see himself so far outdone in signs and miracles. Many wonder at the proofs of divine truths who never experience the power of them.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. 25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.



God had wonderfully owned Philip in his work as an evangelist at Samaria, but he could do no more than an evangelist; there were some peculiar powers reserved to the apostles, for the keeping up of the dignity of their office, and here we have an account of what was done by two of them there—*Peter and John*. The twelve kept together at Jerusalem (v. 1), and thither these good tidings were brought them that *Samaria had received the word of God* (v. 14), that a great harvest of souls was gathered, and was likely to be gathered in to Christ there. The word of God was not only preached to them, but received by them; they bade it welcome, admitted the light of it, and submitted to the power of it: *When they heard it, they sent unto them Peter and John*. If Peter had been, as some say he was, the prince of the apostles, he would have sent some of them, or, if he had seen cause, would have gone himself of his own accord; but he was so far from this that he submitted to an order of the house, and, as a servant to the body, went whither they sent him. Two apostles were sent, the two most eminent, to Samaria, 1. To encourage Philip, to assist him, and strengthen his hands. Ministers in a higher station, and that excel in gifts and graces, should contrive how they may be helpful to those in a lower sphere, and contribute to their comfort and usefulness. 2. To carry on the good work that was begun among the people, and, with those heavenly graces that had enriched them, to confer upon them spiritual gifts. Now observe,

I. How they advanced and improved those of them that were sincere. It is said (v. 16), *The Holy Ghost was as yet fallen upon none of them*, in those extraordinary powers which were conveyed by the descent of the Spirit upon the day of pentecost. They were none of them endued with the gift of tongues, which seems then to have been the most usual immediate effect of the pouring out of the Spirit. See *ch. x. 45, 46*. This was both an eminent sign to those that believed not, and of excellent service to those that did. This, and other such gifts, they had not, *only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and so engaged in him and interested in him, which was necessary to salvation, and in this they had joy and satisfaction (v. 8), though they could not speak with tongues. Those that are indeed given up to Christ, and have experienced the sanctifying influences and operations of the Spirit of grace, have great reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain, though they have not those gifts that are for ornament, and would make them bright. But it is intended that they should go on to the perfection of the present dispensation, for the greater honour of the gospel. We have reason to think that Philip had received these gifts of the Holy Ghost himself, but had not a power to confer them; the apostles must come to do

this; and they did it not upon all that were baptized, but upon some of them, and, it should seem, such as were designed for some office in the church, or at least to be eminent active members of it; and upon some of them *one gift of the Holy Ghost*, and upon others *another*. See 1 Cor. xii. 4, 8; xiv. 26. Now in order to this, 1. *The apostles prayed for them*, v. 15. The Spirit is given, not to ourselves only (Luke xi. 13), but to others also, in answer to prayer: *I will put my Spirit within you* (Ezek. xxxvi. 27), *but I will for this be enquired of*, v. 37. We may take encouragement from this example in praying to God to give the renewing graces of the Holy Ghost to those whose spiritual welfare we are concerned for—for our children, for our friends, for our ministers. We should pray, and pray earnestly, *that they may receive the Holy Ghost*; for this includes all blessings. 2. They laid their hands on them, to signify that their prayers were answered, and *that the gift of the Holy Ghost was conferred upon them*; for, upon the use of this sign, *they received the Holy Ghost, and spoke with tongues*. The laying on of hands was anciently used in blessing, by those who blessed with authority. Thus the apostles blessed these new converts, ordained some to be ministers, and confirmed others in their Christianity. We cannot now, nor can any, thus give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands; but this may intimate to us that those whom we pray for we should use our endeavours with.

II. How they discovered and discarded him that was a hypocrite among them, and this was Simon Magus; for they knew how to *separate between the precious and the vile*. Now observe here,

1. The wicked proposal that Simon made, by which his hypocrisy was discovered (v. 18, 19): *When he saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given* (which should have confirmed his faith in the doctrine of Christ, and increased his veneration for the apostles), it gave him a notion of Christianity as no other than an exalted piece of sorcery, in which he thought himself capable of being equal to the apostles, and therefore *offered them money, saying, Give me also this power*. He does not desire them to lay their hands on him, that he might receive the Holy Ghost himself (for he did not foresee that any thing was to be got by that), but that they would convey to him a power to bestow the gift upon others. He was ambitious to have the honour of an apostle, but not at all solicitous to have the spirit and disposition of a Christian. He was more desirous to gain honour to himself than to do good to others. Now, in making this motion, (1.) He put a great affront upon the apostles, as if they were mercenary men, would do any thing for money, and loved it as well as he did; whereas they had left what they had, for Christ, so far were they

from aiming to make it more. (2.) He put a great affront upon Christianity, as if the miracles that were wrought for the proof of it were done by magic arts, only of a different nature from what he himself had practised formerly. (3.) He showed that, like Balaam, he aimed at the rewards of divination; for he would not have offered money for this power if he had not hoped to get money by it. (4.) He showed that he had a very high conceit of himself, and that he had never his heart truly humbled. Such a wretch as he had been before his baptism should have asked, like the prodigal, to be made as one of the hired servants. But, as soon as he is admitted into the family, no less a place will serve him than to be one of the stewards of the household, and to be entrusted with a power which Philip himself had not, but the apostles only.

2. The just rejection of his proposal, and the cutting reproof Peter gave him for it, v. 20—23.

(1.) Peter shows him his crime (v. 20): *Thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money*; and thus, [1.] He had overvalued the wealth of this world, as if it were an equivalent for any thing, and as if, because, as Solomon saith, *it answers all things*, relating to the life that now is, it would answer all things relating to the other life, and would purchase the pardon of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life. [2.] He had undervalued the gift of the Holy Ghost and put it upon a level with the common gifts of nature and providence. He thought the power of an apostle might as well be had for a good fee as the advice of a physician or a lawyer, which was the greatest despite that could be done to the Spirit of grace. All the buying and selling of pardons and indulgences in the church of Rome is the product of this same wicked thought, *that the gift of God may be purchased with money*, when the offer of divine grace so expressly runs, *without money and without price*.

(2.) He shows him his character, which is inferred from his crime. From every thing that a man says or does amiss we cannot infer that he is a hypocrite in the profession he makes of religion; but this of Simon's was such a fundamental error as could by no means consist with a state of grace; his offering money (and that got by sorcery too) was an incontestable evidence that he was yet under the power of a worldly and carnal mind, and was yet that *natural man which receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them*. And therefore Peter tells him plainly, [1.] That his heart was *not right in the sight of God*, v. 21. "Though thou professest to believe, and art baptized, yet thou art not sincere." We are as our hearts are; if they be not right, we are wrong; and they are open in the sight of God, who knows them, judges them, and judges of us by them. Our hearts are that

which they are in the sight of God, who cannot be deceived; and if they be not right in his sight, whatever our pretensions be, our religion is vain, and will stand us in no stead: our great concern is to approve ourselves to him in our integrity, for otherwise we cheat ourselves into our own ruin. Some refer this particularly to the proposal he made; what he asked is denied him, because his *heart is not right in the sight of God* in asking it. He does not aim at the glory of God nor the honour of Christ in it, but to make a hand of it for himself; he *asks, and has not, because he asks amiss, that he may consume it upon his lusts*, and be still thought some great one. [2.] That he is *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*: *I perceive that thou art so*, v. 23. This is plain dealing, and plain dealing is best when we are dealing about souls and eternity. Simon had got a great name among the people, and of late a good name too among God's people, and yet Peter here gives him a black character. Note, It is possible for a man to continue under the power of sin, and yet to put on a form of godliness. *I perceive it*, saith Peter. It was not so much by the spirit of discerning, with which Peter was endued, that he perceived this, as by Simon's discovery of it in the proposal he made. Note, The disguises of hypocrites many times are soon seen through; the nature of the wolf shows itself notwithstanding the cover of the sheep's clothing. Now the character here given of Simon is really the character of all wicked people. *First*, They are *in the gall of bitterness*—odious to God, as that which is bitter as gall is to us. Sin is an abominable thing, which the Lord hates, and sinners are by it made abominable to him; they are vicious in their own nature. Indwelling sin is a *root of bitterness*, that *bears gall and wormwood*, Deut. xxix. 18. The faculties are corrupted, and the mind embittered against all good, Heb. xii. 15. It intimates likewise the pernicious consequences of sin; the *end is bitter as wormwood*. *Secondly*, They are *in the bond of iniquity*—bound over to the judgment of God by the guilt of sin, and bound under the dominion of Satan by the power of sin; led captive by him at his will, and it is a sore bondage, like that in Egypt, making the life bitter.

(3.) He reads him his doom in two things:—

[1.] He shall sink with his worldly wealth, which he overvalued: *Thy money perish with thee*. *First*, Hereby Peter rejects his offer with the utmost disdain and indignation. "Dost thou think thou canst bribe us to betray our trust, and to put the power we are entrusted with into such unworthy hands? Away with thee and thy money too; we will have nothing to do with either. *Get thee behind me, Satan*." When we are tempted with money to do an evil thing, we should see what a perishing thing money is, and scorn



to be biassed by it. It is the character of the upright man that he shakes his hands from holding, from touching bribes, Isa. xxxiii. 15. *Secondly*, He warns him of his danger of utter destruction if he continued in this mind: "Thy money will perish and thou wilt lose it, and all that thou canst purchase with it. As *meats for the belly and the belly for meats* (1 Cor. vi. 13), so goods for money and money for goods, but God shall destroy both it and them—they perish in the using; but this is not the worst of it: *thou wilt perish with it, and it with thee*; and it will be an aggravation of thy ruin, and a heavy load upon thy perishing soul, that thou hadst money, which might have been made to turn to a good account (Luke xvi. 9), which might have been laid at the apostles' feet, as a charity, and would have been accepted, but was thrust into their hands as a bribe, and was rejected. *So, remember this.*"

[2.] He shall come short of the spiritual blessings which he undervalued (v. 21): "*Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter*; thou hast nothing to do with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, thou dost not understand them, thou art excluded from them, hast put a bar in thine own door; thou canst not receive the Holy Ghost thyself, nor power to confer the Holy Ghost upon others, for *thy heart is not right in the sight of God*, if thou thinkest that Christianity is a trade to live by in this world, and therefore *thou hast no part nor lot in the eternal life in the other world* which the gospel offers. Note, *First*, There are many who profess the Christian religion, and yet have *no part nor lot in the matter, no part in Christ* (John xiii. 8), *no lot in the heavenly Canaan*. *Secondly*, They are those whose hearts are not right in the sight of God, are not animated by a right spirit, nor guided by a right rule, nor directed to the right end.

(4.) He gives him good counsel, notwithstanding, v. 22. Though he was angry with him, yet he did not abandon him; and, though he would have him see his case to be very bad, yet he would not have him think it desperate; yet now there is hope in Israel. Observe,

[1.] What it is that he advises him to: He must do his first works. *First*, He must *repent*,—must see his error and retract it,—must change his mind and way,—must be humbled and ashamed for what he has done. His repentance must be particular: "Repent of this, own thyself guilty in this, and be sorry for it." He must lay a load upon himself for it, must not extenuate it, by calling it a mistake, or misguided zeal, but must aggravate it by calling it *wickedness*, his wickedness, the fruit of his own corruption. Those that have said and done amiss must, as far as they can, unsay it and undo it again by repentance. *Secondly*, He must *pray* to God, must pray that God would give him repent-

ance, and pardon upon repentance. Penitents must pray, which implies a desire towards God, and a confidence in Christ. Simon Magus, as great a man as he thinks himself, shall not be courted into the apostles' communion (how much soever some would think it a reputation to them) upon any other terms than those upon which other sinners are admitted—repentance and prayer.

[2.] What encouragement he gives him to do this: *If perhaps the thought of thy heart*, this wicked thought of thine, may be forgiven thee. Note, *First*, There may be a great deal of wickedness in the thought of the heart, its false notions, and corrupt affections, and wicked projects, which must be repented of, or we are undone. *Secondly*, The thought of the heart, though ever so wicked, shall be forgiven, upon our repentance, and not laid to our charge. When Peter here puts a *perhaps* upon it, the doubt is of the sincerity of his repentance, not of his pardon if his repentance be sincere. *If indeed the thought of thy heart may be forgiven*, so it may be read. Or it intimates that the greatness of his sin might justly make the pardon doubtful, though the promise of the gospel had put the matter out of doubt, in case he did truly repent: like that (Lam. iii. 29), *If so be there may be hope*.

[3.] Simon's request to them to pray for him, v. 24. He was startled and put into confusion by that which Peter said, finding that resented thus which he thought would have been embraced with both arms; and he cries out, *Pray you to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken come upon me*. Here was, *First*, Something well—that he was affected with the reproof given him, and terrified by the character given of him, enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble; and, this being so, he begged the prayers of the apostles for him, wishing to have an interest in them, who, he believed, had a good interest in heaven. *Secondly*, Something wanting. He begged of them to pray for him, but did not pray for himself, as he ought to have done; and, in desiring them to pray for him, his concern is more that the judgments he had made himself liable to might be prevented than that his corruptions might be mortified, and his heart, by divine grace, be made right in the sight of God; like Pharaoh, who would have Moses entreat the Lord for him, that he would take away this death only, not that he would take away this sin, this hardness of heart, Exod. viii. 8; x. 17. Some think that Peter had denounced some particular judgments against him, as against Ananias and Sapphira, which, upon this submission of his, at the apostle's intercession, were prevented; or, from what is related, he might infer that some token of God's wrath would fall upon him, which he thus dreaded and deprecated.



*Lastly*, Here is the return of the apostles to Jerusalem, when they had finished the business they came about; for as yet they were not to disperse; but, though they came hither to do that work which was peculiar to them as apostles, yet, opportunity offering itself, they applied themselves to that which was common to all gospel ministers. 1. There, in the city of Samaria, they were preachers: *They testified the word of the Lord*, solemnly attested the truth of the gospel, and confirmed what the other ministers preached. They did not pretend to bring them any thing new, though they were apostles, but bore their testimony to the word of the Lord as they had received it. 2. In their road home they were itinerant preachers; as they passed through many villages of the Samaritans they preached the gospel. Though the congregations there were not so considerable as those in the cities, either for number or figure, yet their souls were as precious, and the apostles did not think it below them to preach the gospel to them. God has a regard to the inhabitants of his villages in Israel (Judg. v. 11), and so should we.

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee,

of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea.

We have here the story of the conversion of an Ethiopian eunuch to the faith of Christ, by whom, we have reason to think, the knowledge of Christ was sent into that country where he lived, and that scripture fulfilled, *Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands* (one of the first of the nations) *unto God*, Ps. lxxviii. 31.

I. Philip the evangelist is directed into the road where he would meet with this Ethiopian, v. 26. When the churches in Samaria were settled, and had ministers appointed them, the apostles went back to Jerusalem; but Philip stays, expecting to be employed in breaking up fresh ground in the country. And here we have, 1. Direction given him by an angel (probably in a dream or vision of the night) what course to steer: *Arise, and go towards the south*. Though angels were not employed to preach the gospel, they were often employed in carrying messages to ministers for advice and encouragement, as *ch. v. 19*. We cannot now expect such guides in our way; but doubtless there is a special providence of God conversant about the removes and settlements of ministers, and one way or other he will direct those who sincerely desire to follow him into that way in which he will own them: *he will guide them with his eye*. Philip must go southward, to the way that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza, through the desert or wilderness of Judah. He would never have thought of going thither, into a desert, into a common road through the desert; small probability of finding work there! Yet thither he is sent,



according to our Saviour's parable, foretelling the call of the Gentiles, *Go you into the highways, and the hedges*, Matt. xxii. 9. Sometimes God opens a door of opportunity to his ministers in places very unlikely. 2. His obedience to this direction (v. 27): *He arose and went*, without objecting, or so much as asking, "What business have I there?" Or, "What likelihood is there of doing good there?" *He went out, not knowing whither he went*, or whom he was to meet.

II. An account is given of this eunuch (v. 27), who and what he was, on whom this distinguishing favour was bestowed. 1. He was a foreigner, *a man of Ethiopia*. There were two Ethiopias, one in Arabia, but that lay east from Canaan; it should seem this was Ethiopia in Africa, which lay south, beyond Egypt, a great way off from Jerusalem; for *in Christ those that were afar off were made nigh*, according to the promise, *that the ends of the earth should see the great salvation*. The Ethiopians were looked upon as the meanest and most despicable of the nations, blackamoors, as if nature had stigmatized them; yet the gospel is sent to them, and divine grace looks upon them, *though they are black, though the sun has looked upon them*. 2. He was a person of quality, a great man in his own country, *a eunuch*, not in body, but in office—lord chamberlain or steward of the household; and either by the dignity of his place or by his personal character, which commanded respect, he was *of great authority*, and bore a mighty sway *under Candace queen of the Ethiopians*, who probably was successor to the queen of Sheba, who is called *the queen of the south*, that country being governed by queens, to whom *Candace* was a common name, as *Pharaoh* to the kings of Egypt. *He had the charge of all her treasure*; so great a trust did she repose in him. *Not many mighty, not many noble, are called*; but some are. 3. He was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, for *he came to Jerusalem to worship*. Some think that he was a proselyte of righteousness, who was circumcised, and kept the feasts; others that he was only a proselyte of the gate, a Gentile, but who had renounced idolatry, and worshipped the God of Israel occasionally in the court of the Gentiles; but, if so, then Peter was not the first that preached the gospel to the Gentiles, as he says he was. Some think that there were remains of the knowledge of the true God in this country, ever since the queen of Sheba's time; and probably the ancestor of this eunuch was one of her attendants, who transmitted to his posterity what he learned at Jerusalem.

III. Philip and the eunuch are brought together into a close conversation; and now Philip shall know the meaning of his being sent into a desert, for there he meets with a chariot, that shall serve for a synagogue, and one man, the conversion of whom shall be in

effect, for aught he knows, the conversion of a whole nation.

1. Philip is ordered to fall into company with this traveller that is going home from Jerusalem towards Gaza, thinking he has done all the business of his journey, when the great business which the overruling providence of God designed in it was yet undone. He had been at Jerusalem, where the apostles were preaching the Christian faith, and multitudes professing it, and yet there he had taken no notice of it, and made no enquiries after it—nay, it should seem, had slighted it, and turned his back upon it; yet the grace of God pursues him, overtakes him in the desert, and there overcomes him. Thus God is often *found of those that sought him not*, Isa. lxxv. 1. Philip has this order, not by an angel, as before, but by the Spirit whispering it in his ear (v. 29): "*Go near, and join thyself to this chariot*; go so near as that the gentleman may take notice of thee." We should study to do good to those we light in company with upon the road. thus the lips of the righteous may feed many. We should not be so shy of all strangers as some affect to be. Of those of whom we know nothing else we know this, that they have souls.

2. He finds him reading in his Bible, as he sat in his chariot (v. 28): *He ran to him, and heard him read*; he read out, for the benefit of those that were with him, v. 30. He not only relieved the tediousness of the journey, but redeemed time by reading, not philosophy, history, nor politics, much less a romance or a play, but the scriptures, *the book of Esaias*; that book Christ read in (Luke iv. 17) and the eunuch here, which should recommend it particularly to our reading. Perhaps the eunuch was now reading over again those portions of scripture which he had heard read and expounded at Jerusalem, that he might recollect what he had heard. Note, (1.) It is the duty of every one of us to converse much with the holy scriptures. (2.) Persons of quality should abound more than others in the exercises of piety, because their example will influence many, and they have their time more at command. (3.) It is wisdom for men of business to redeem time for holy duties; time is precious, and it is the best husbandry in the world to gather up the fragments of time, that none be lost, to fill up every minute with something that will turn to a good account. (4.) When we are returning from public worship we should use means in private for the keeping up of the good affections there kindled, and the preserving of the good impressions there made, 1 Chron. xxix. 18. (5.) Those that are diligent in searching the scriptures are in a fair way to improve in knowledge; for *to him that hath shall be given*.

3. He puts a fair question to him: *Understandest thou what thou readest?* Not

by way of reproach, but with design to offer him his service. Note, What we read and hear of the word of God it highly concerns us to understand, especially what we read and hear concerning Christ; and therefore we should often ask ourselves whether we understand it or no: *Have you understood all these things?* Matt. xiii. 51. And have you understood them aright? We cannot profit by the scriptures unless we do in some measure understand them, 1 Cor. xiv. 16, 17. And, blessed be God, what is necessary to salvation is easy to be understood.

4. The eunuch in a sense of his need of assistance, desires Philip's company (v. 31): "*How can I understand, says he, except some one guide me?*" Therefore pray come up, and sit with me." (1.) He speaks as one that had very low thoughts of himself, and his own capacity and attainments. He was so far from taking it as an affront to be asked whether he understood what he read, though Philip was a stranger, on foot, and probably looked mean (which many a less man would have done, and have called him an impertinent fellow, and bid him go about his business, what was it to him?) that he takes the question kindly, makes a very modest reply, *How can I?* We have reason to think he was an intelligent man, and as well acquainted with the meaning of scripture as most were, and yet he modestly confesses his weakness. Note, Those that would learn must see their need to be taught. The prophet must first own that he knows not what these are, and then the angel will tell him, Zech. iv. 13. (2.) He speaks as one very desirous to be taught, to have some one to guide him. Observe, He read the scripture, though there were many things in it which he did not understand. Though there are many things in the scriptures which are *dark and hard to be understood*, nay, which are often misunderstood, yet we must not therefore throw them by, but study them for the sake of those things that are easy, which is the likeliest way to come by degrees to the understanding of those things that are difficult: for knowledge and grace grow gradually. (3.) He invited Philip to *come up and sit with him*; not as Jehu took Jonadab into his chariot, to come and see his zeal for the Lord of hosts (2 Kings x. 16), but rather, "Come, see my ignorance, and instruct me." He will gladly do Philip the honour to take him into the coach with him, if Philip will do him the favour to expound a portion of scripture to him. Note, In order to our right understanding of the scripture, it is requisite we should have some one to guide us; some good books, and some good men, but, above all, the Spirit of grace, to lead us into all truth.

IV. The portion of scripture which the eunuch recited, with some hints of Philip's discourse upon it. The preachers of the gospel had a very good handle to take hold of those

by who were conversant with the scriptures of the Old Testament and received them, especially when they found them actually engaged in the study of them, as the eunuch was here.

1. The chapter he was reading was the fifty-third of Isaiah, two verses of which are here quoted (v. 32, 33), part of the seventh and eighth verses; they are set down according to the Septuagint version, which in some things differs from the original Hebrew. Grotius thinks the eunuch read it in the Hebrew, but that Luke takes the Septuagint translation, as readier to the language in which he wrote; and he supposes that the eunuch had learned from the many Jews that were in Ethiopia both their religion and language. But, considering that the Septuagint version was made in Egypt, which was the next country adjoining to Ethiopia, and lay between it and Jerusalem, I rather think that translation was most familiar to him: it appears by Isa. xx. 4 that there was much communication between those two nations—Egypt and Ethiopia. The greatest variation from the Hebrew is that what in the original is, *He was taken from prison and from judgment* (hurried with the utmost violence and precipitation from one judgment-seat to another; or, *From force and from judgment he was taken away*; that is, It was from the fury of the people, and their continual clamours, and the judgment of Pilate thereupon, that he was taken away), is here read, *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away*. He appeared so mean and despicable in their eyes that they denied him common justice, and against all the rules of equity, to the benefit of which every man is entitled, they declared him innocent, and yet condemned him to die; nothing criminal can be proved upon him, but he is down, and down with him. Thus *in his humiliation his judgment was taken away*; so, the sense is much the same with that of the Hebrew. So that these verses foretold concerning the Messiah, (1.) That he should die, should be *led to the slaughter*, as sheep that were offered in sacrifice—that his life should be taken from among men, taken from the earth. With what little reason then was the death of Christ a stumbling-block to the unbelieving Jews, when it was so plainly foretold by their own prophets, and was so necessary to the accomplishment of his undertaking! Then is the offence of the cross ceased. (2.) That he should die wrongfully, should die by violence, should be hurried out of his life, and *his judgment shall be taken away*—no justice done to him; for he must be *cut off, but not for himself*. (3.) That he should die patiently. Like a lamb dumb before the shearer, nay, and before the butcher too, *so he opened not his mouth*. Never was there such an example of patience as our Lord Jesus was in his sufferings; when he was accused, when he was abused, he was silent, *reviled not*



again, threatened not. (4.) That yet he should live for ever, to ages which cannot be numbered; for so I understand those words, *Who shall declare his generation?* The Hebrew word properly signifies the *duration of one life*, Eccl. i. 4. Now who can conceive or express how long he shall continue, notwithstanding this; *for his life is taken only from the earth*; in heaven he shall live to endless and innumerable ages, as it follows in Isa. liii. 10, *He shall prolong his days.*

2. The eunuch's question upon this is, *Of whom speaketh the prophet this?* v. 34. He does not desire Philip to give him some critical remarks upon the words and phrases, and the idioms of the language, but to acquaint him with the general scope and design of the prophecy, to furnish him with a key, in the use of which he might, by comparing one thing with another, be led into the meaning of the particular passage. Prophecies had usually in them something of obscurity, till they were explained by the accomplishment of them, as this now was. It is a material question he asks, and a very sensible one: "Does the prophet speak this of himself, in expectation of being used, being misused, as the other prophets were? or does he speak it of some other man, in his own age, or in some age to come?" Though the modern Jews will not allow it to be spoken of the Messiah, yet their ancient doctors did so interpret it; and perhaps the eunuch knew this, and did partly understand it so himself, only he proposed this question, to draw on discourse with Philip; for the way to improve in learning is to consult the learned. As *they must enquire the law at the mouth of the priests* (Mal. ii. 7), so they must enquire the gospel, especially that part of the treasure which is hid in the field of the Old Testament, at the mouth of the ministers of Christ. The way to receive good instructions is to ask good questions.

3. Philip takes this fair occasion given him to open to him the great mystery of the gospel concerning *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. He began at this scripture, took this for his text (as Christ did another passage of the same prophecy, Luke iv. 21), and preached unto him *Jesus*, v. 35. This is all the account given us of Philip's sermon, because it was the same in effect with Peter's sermons, which we have had before. The business of gospel ministers is to preach *Jesus*, and this is the preaching that is likely to do good. It is probable that Philip had now occasion for his gift of tongues, that he might preach Christ to this Ethiopian in the language of his own country. And here we have an instance of speaking of the things of God, and speaking of them to good purpose, not only as we sit in the house, but as we walk by the way, according to that rule, Deut. vi. 7.

V. The eunuch is baptized in the name of Christ, v. 36—38. It is probable that the eunuch had heard at Jerusalem of the doc-

trine of Christ, so that it was not altogether new to him. But, if he had, what could that do towards this speedy conquest that was made of his heart for Christ. It was a powerful working of the Spirit with and by Philip's preaching that gained the point. Now here we have,

1. The modest proposal which the eunuch made of himself for baptism (v. 36): *As they went on their way*, discoursing of Christ, the eunuch asking more questions and Philip answering them to his satisfaction, they came unto a certain water, a well, river, or pond, the sight of which made the eunuch think of being baptized. Thus God, by hints of providence which seem casual, sometimes puts his people in mind of their duty, of which otherwise perhaps they would not have thought. The eunuch knew not how little a while Philip might be with him, nor where he might afterwards enquire for him. He could not expect his travelling with him to his next stage, and therefore, if Philip think fit, he will take the present convenience which offers itself of being baptized: "*See, here is water*, which perhaps we may not meet with a great while again; *what doth hinder me to be baptized?*" Canst thou show any cause why I should not be admitted a disciple and follower of Christ by baptism?" Observe, (1.) He does not demand baptism, does not say, "Here is water and here I am resolved I will be baptized;" for, if Philip have any thing to offer to the contrary, he is willing to waive it for the present. If he think him not fit to be baptized, or if there be any thing in the institution of the ordinance which will not admit such a speedy administration of it, he will not insist upon it. The most forward zeal must submit to order and rule. But, (2.) He does desire it, and, unless Philip can show cause why not, he desires it now, and is not willing to defer it. Note, In the solemn dedicating and devoting of ourselves to God, it is good to make haste, and not to delay; for the present time is the best time, Ps. cxix. 60. Those who have received the thing signified by baptism should not put off receiving the sign. The eunuch feared lest the good affections now working in him should cool and abate, and therefore was willing immediately to bind his soul with the baptismal bonds unto the Lord, that he might bring the matter to an issue.

2. The fair declaration which Philip made him of the terms upon which he might have the privilege of baptism (v. 37): "*If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest*; that is, If thou believest this doctrine which I have preached to thee concerning *Jesus*, if thou receivest the record God has given concerning him, and set to thy seal that it is true." He must believe with all his heart, for with the heart man believeth, not with the head only, by an assent to gospel truths in the understanding; but with the heart, by a consent of the will to gospel terms. "If thou do in-



deed believe with all thy heart, thou art by that united to Christ, and, if thou give proofs and evidences that thou dost so, thou mayest by baptism be joined to the church." 27-28

3. The confession of faith which the eunuch made in order to his being baptized. It is very short, but it is comprehensive and much to the purpose, and what was sufficient: *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* He was before a worshipper of the true God, so that all he had to do now was to *receive Christ Jesus the Lord.* (1.) He believes that *Jesus is the Christ*, the true Messiah promised, the *anointed One.* (2.) That Christ is *Jesus—a Saviour*, the only Saviour of his people from their sins. And, (3.) That this Jesus Christ is the *Son of God*, that he has a divine nature, as the Son is of the same nature with the Father; and that, being the Son of God; he is the *heir of all things.* This is the principal peculiar doctrine of Christianity, and whosoever believe this with all their hearts, and confess it, they and their seed are to be baptized.

4. The baptizing of him hereupon. The eunuch ordered his coachman to stop, *commanded the chariot to stand still.* It was the best baiting place he ever met with in any of his journeys. *They went down both into the water*, for they had no convenient vessels with them, being upon a journey, wherewith to take up water, and must therefore go down into it; not that they stripped off their clothes, and went naked into the water, but, going barefoot according to the custom, they went perhaps up to the ankles or mid-leg into the water, and Philip sprinkled water upon him, according to the prophecy which this eunuch had probably but just now read, for it was but a few verses before those which Philip found him upon, and was very apposite to his case (Isa. lii. 15): *So shall he sprinkle many nations, kings and great men shall shut their mouths at him, shall submit to him, and acquiesce in him, for that which had not before been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.* Observe, Though Philip had very lately been deceived in Simon Magus, and had admitted him to baptism, though he afterwards appeared to be no true convert, yet he did not therefore scruple to baptize the eunuch upon his profession of faith immediately, without putting him upon a longer trial than usual. If some hypocrites crowd into the church, who afterwards prove a grief and scandal to us, yet we must not therefore make the door of admission any straiter than Christ has made it; they shall answer for their apostasy, and not we.

VI. Philip and the eunuch are separated presently; and this is as surprising as the other parts of the story. One would have expected that the eunuch should either have staid with Philip, or have taken him along with him into his own country, and, there being so many ministers in those parts, he might

be spared, and it would be worth while: but God ordered otherwise. As soon as they had *come up out of the water*, before the eunuch went into his chariot again, *the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip* (v. 39), and did not give him time to make an exhortation to the eunuch, as usual after baptism, which it is probable the one intended and the other expected. But his sudden departure was sufficient to make up the want of that exhortation, for it seems to have been miraculous, and that he was *caught up* in the air in the eunuch's sight, and so carried out of his sight; and the working of this miracle upon Philip was a confirmation of his doctrine, as much as the working of a miracle by him would have been. He was *caught away*, and *the eunuch saw him no more*, but, having lost his minister, returned to the use of his Bible again. Now here we are told,

1. How the eunuch was disposed: *He went on his way rejoicing.* He pursued his journey. Business called him home, and he must hasten to it; for it was no way inconsistent with his Christianity, which places no sanctity nor perfection in men's being hermits or recluses, but is a religion which men may and ought to carry about with them into the affairs of this life. But he went on rejoicing; so far was he from reflecting upon this sudden revolution and change, or advancement rather, in his religion, with any regret, that his second thoughts confirmed him abundantly in it, and he went on, *rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory*; he was never better pleased in all his life. He rejoiced, (1.) That he himself was joined to Christ and had an interest in him. And, (2.) That he had these good tidings to bring to his countrymen, and a prospect of bringing them also, by virtue of his interest among them, into fellowship with Christ; for he returned, not only a Christian, but a minister. Some copies read this verse thus: *And, when they were come up out of the water, the Holy Spirit fell upon the eunuch* (without the ceremony of the apostle's imposition of hands), *but the angel of the Lord caught away Philip.*

2. How Philip was disposed of (v. 40): *He was found at Azotus or Ashdod*, formerly a city of the Philistines; there the angel or Spirit of the Lord dropped him, which was about thirty miles from Gaza, whither the eunuch was going, and where Dr. Lightfoot thinks he took ship, and went by sea into his own country. But Philip, wherever he was, would not be idle. *Passing through, he preached in all the cities* till he came to Cesarea, and there he settled, and, for aught that appears, had his principal residence ever after; for at Cesarea we find him in a house of his own, *ch. xxi. 8.* He that had been faithful in working for Christ as an itinerant at length gains a settlement.

#### CHAP. IX.

In this chapter we have, 1. The famous story of St. Paul's conversion from being an outrageous persecutor of the gospel of Christ to be an illustrious professor and preacher of it. 1. How



he was first awakened and wrought upon by an appearance of Christ himself to him as he was going upon an errand of persecution to Damascus: and what a condition he was in while he lay under the power of those convictions and terrors, ver. 1-9. 2. How he was baptized by Ananias, by immediate directions from heaven, ver. 10-19. 3. How he immediately commenced doctor, and preached the faith of Christ, and proved what he preached, ver. 20-22. 4. How he was persecuted, and narrowly escaped with his life, ver. 23-25. 5. How he was admitted among the brethren at Jerusalem: how he preached, and was persecuted there, ver. 26-30. 6. The rest and quietness which the churches enjoyed for some time after this, ver. 31. 11. The cure wrought by Peter on Eneas, who had long been laid up with a palsy, ver. 32-35. 111. The raising of Tabitha from death to life, at the prayer of Peter, ver. 36-48.

**A**ND Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* 6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. 7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

We found mention made of Saul twice or thrice in the story of Stephen, for the sacred penman longed to come to his story; and now we are come to it, not quite taking leave of Peter, but from henceforward being mostly taken up with Paul the apostle of the Gentiles, as Peter was of the circumcision. His name in Hebrew was *Saul*—*desired*, though as remarkably little in stature as his namesake king Saul was tall and stately; one of the ancients calls him, *Homo tricubitalis*—*but four feet and a half in height*; his Roman name which he went by among the citizens of Rome was *Paul*—*little*. He was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, a free city of the Romans, and himself a freeman of that city. His father and mother were both native Jews;

therefore he calls himself a *Hebrew of the Hebrews*; he was of the tribe of Benjamin, which adhered to Judah. His education was in the schools of Tarsus first, which was a little Athens for learning; there he acquainted himself with the philosophy and poetry of the Greeks. Thence he was sent to the university at Jerusalem, to study divinity and the Jewish law. His tutor was Gamaliel, an eminent Pharisee. He had extraordinary natural parts, and improved mightily in learning. He had likewise a handicraft trade (being bred to tent-making), which was common with those among the Jews who were bred scholars (as Dr. Lightfoot saith), for the earning of their maintenance, and the avoiding of idleness. This is the young man on whom the grace of God wrought this mighty change here recorded, about a year after the ascension of Christ, or little more. We are here told,

I. How bad he was, how very bad, before his conversion; just before he was an inveterate enemy to Christianity, did his utmost to root it out, by persecuting all that embraced it. In other respects he was well enough, as *touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless*, a man of no ill morals, but a blasphemer of Christ, a persecutor of Christians, and injurious to both, 1 Tim. i. 13. And so ill informed was his conscience that he thought he ought to do what he did against the name of Christ (*ch. xxvi. 9*) and that he did God service in it, as was foretold, John xvi. 2. Here we have,

1. His general enmity and rage against the Christian religion (*v. 1*): He *yet breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*. The persons persecuted were the disciples of the Lord; because they were so, under that character he hated and persecuted them. The matter of the persecution was threatenings and slaughter. There is persecution in threatenings (*ch. iv. 17, 21*); they terrify and break the spirit: and though we say, Threatened folks live long, yet those whom Saul threatened, if he prevailed not thereby to frighten them from Christ, he slew them, he persecuted them to death, *ch. xxii. 4*. His breathing out threatenings and slaughter intimates that it was natural to him, and his constant business. He even breathed in this as in his element. He breathed it out with heat and vehemence; his very breath, like that of some venomous creatures, was pestilential. He breathed death to the Christians, wherever he came; he puffed at them in his pride (*Ps. xii. 4, 5*), spit his venom at them in his rage. Saul yet breathing thus intimates, (1.) That he still persisted in it; not satisfied with the blood of those he had slain, he still cries, *Give, give.* (2.) That he should shortly be of another mind; as yet he breathes out threatenings and slaughter, but he has not long to live such a life as this, that breath will be stopped shortly.

2. His particular design upon the Christians at Damascus; thither was the gospel now lately carried by those that fled from the persecution at Stephen's death, and thought to be safe and quiet there, and were connived at by those in power there: but Saul cannot be easy if he knows a Christian is quiet; and therefore, hearing that the Christians in Damascus were so, he resolves to give them disturbance. In order to this, he applies to the high priest for a commission (v. 1) to go to Damascus, v. 2. The high priest needed not to be stirred up to persecute the Christians, he was forward enough of himself to do it; but it seems the young persecutor drove more furiously than the old one. Leaders in sin are the worst of sinners; and the proselytes which the scribes and Pharisees make often prove seven times more the children of hell than themselves. He saith (*ch.* xxii. 5) that this commission was had from the whole estate of the elders: and proud enough this furious bigot was to have a commission directed to him, with the seal of the great sanhedrim affixed to it. Now the commission was to empower him to enquire among the synagogues, or congregations, of the Jews that were at Damascus, whether there were any that belonged to them that inclined to favour this new sect or heresy, that believed in Christ; and if he found any such, whether men or women, to bring them up prisoners to Jerusalem, to be proceeded against according to law by the great council there. Observe, (1.) The Christians are here said to be *those of this way*; *those of the way*, so it is in the original. Perhaps the Christians sometimes called themselves so, from *Christ the Way*; or, because they looked on themselves as but in the way, and not yet at home; or, the enemies thus represented it as a way by itself, a by-way, a party, a faction. (2.) The high priest and sanhedrim claimed a power over the Jews in all countries, and had a deference paid to their authority in matters of religion, by all their synagogues, even those that were not of the jurisdiction of the civil government of the Jewish nation. And such a sovereignty the Roman pontiff now claims as the Jewish pontiff then did, though he has not so much to show for it. (3.) By this commission, all that worshipped God in the way that they called heresy, though agreeing exactly with the original institutes even of the Jewish church, whether they were men or women, were to be prosecuted. Even the weaker sex, who in a case of this nature might deserve excuse, or at least compassion, shall find neither with Saul any more than they do with the popish persecutors. (4.) He was ordered to bring them all bound to Jerusalem as criminals of the first magnitude, which, as it would be the more likely to terrify them, so it would be to magnify Saul, as having the command of the forces that were to carry them up, and opportunity

of breathing out threatenings and slaughter. Thus was Saul employed when the grace of God wrought that great change in him. Let not us then despair of renewing grace for the conversion of the greatest sinners, nor let such despair of the pardoning mercy of God for the greatest sin; for Paul himself obtained mercy, that he might be a monument, 1 Tim. i. 13.

II. How suddenly and strangely a blessed change was wrought in him, not in the use of any ordinary means, but by miracles. The conversion of Paul is one of the wonders of the church. Here is,

1. The place and time of it: *As he journeyed, he came near to Damascus*; and there Christ met with him.

(1.) He was in the way, travelling upon his journey; not in the temple, nor in the synagogue, nor in the meeting of the Christians, but by the way. The work of conversion is not tied to the church, though ordinarily public administrations are made use of. Some are reclaimed in slumberings on the bed (Job xxxiii. 15—17), and some in travelling upon the road alone: Thoughts are as free, and there is as good an opportunity of communing with our own hearts there, as upon the bed; and there the Spirit may set in with us, for that wind blows where it listeth. Some observe that Saul was spoken to abroad in the open air that there might be no suspicion of imposture, nor of a trick put upon him in it.

(2.) He was near Damascus, almost at his journey's end, ready to enter the city, the chief city of Syria. Some observe that he who was to be the apostle of the Gentiles was converted to the faith of Christ in a Gentile country. Damascus had been infamous for persecuting God's people formerly—they threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron (Amos i. 3), and now it was likely to be so again.

(3.) He was in a wicked way, pursuing his design against the Christians at Damascus, and pleasing himself with the thought that he should devour this new-born child of Christianity there. Note, Sometimes the grace of God works upon sinners when they are at the worst, and hotly engaged in the most desperate sinful pursuits, which is much for the glory both of God's pity and of his power.

(4.) The cruel edict and decree he had with him drew near to be put in execution; and now it was happily prevented, which may be considered, [1.] As a great kindness to the poor saints at Damascus, who had notice of his coming, as appears by what Ananias said (v. 13, 14), and were apprehensive of their danger from him, and trembled as poor lambs at the approach of a ravening wolf; Saul's conversion was their security for the present. Christ has many ways of delivering the godly out of temptation, and sometimes does it by a change wrought in their persecutors, either restraining their wrathful spirits (Ps. lxxvi.



10) and mollifying them for a time; as the Old-Testament Saul, who relented towards David more than once (1 Sam. xxiv. 16; xxvi. 21), or renewing their spirits, and fixing upon them durable impressions, as upon the New-Testament Saul here. [2.] It was also a very great mercy to Saul himself to be hindered from executing his wicked design, in which if he had now proceeded, perhaps it had been the filling up of the measure of his iniquity. Note, It is to be valued as a signal token of the divine favour if God, either by the inward operations of his grace or the outward occurrences of his providence, prevent us from prosecuting and executing a sinful purpose, 1 Sam. xxv. 32.

2. The appearance of Christ to him in his glory. Here it is only said that there *shone round about him a light from heaven*; but it appears from what follows (v. 17) that the Lord Jesus was in this light, and appeared to him by the way. He saw that just One (ch. xxii. 14), and see ch. xxvi. 13. Whether he saw him at a distance, as Stephen saw him, in the heavens, or nearer in the air, is not certain. It is not inconsistent with what is said of the heavens receiving Christ till the end of time (ch. iii. 21) to suppose that he did, upon such an extraordinary occasion as this, make a personal visit, but a very short one, to this lower world; it was necessary to Paul's being an apostle that he should see the Lord, and so he did, 1 Cor. ix. 1; xv. 8. (1.) This light shone upon him *suddenly*—*ξαίφνης*, when Paul never thought of any such thing, and without any previous warning. Christ's manifestations of himself to poor souls are many times sudden and very surprising, and he anticipates them with the blessings of his goodness. This the disciples that Christ called to himself found. *Or ever I was aware*, Cant. vi. 12. (2.) It was a light from heaven, the fountain of light, from the God of heaven, the Father of lights. It was a light above the brightness of the sun (ch. xxvi. 13), for it was visible at mid-day, and outshone the sun in meridian strength and lustre, Isa. xxiv. 23. (3.) It shone *round about him*, not in his face only, but on every side of him; let him turn which way he will, he finds himself surrounded with the discoveries of it. And this was designed not only to startle him, and awaken his attention (for well may he expect to hear when he is thus made to see something very extraordinary), but to signify the enlightening of his understanding with the knowledge of Christ. The devil comes to the soul in darkness; by this he gets and keeps possession of it. But Christ comes to the soul in light, for he is himself the light of the world, bright and glorious in himself, beneficial and gracious to us, as light. The first thing in this new creation, as in that of the world, is light, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Hence all Christians are said to be *children of the light and of the day*, Eph. v. 8.

3. The arresting of Saul, and his detachment: *He fell to the earth*, v. 4. Some think that he was on foot, and that this light, which perhaps was accompanied with a thunder-clap, so terrified him that he could not keep his feet, but fell upon his face, usually a posture of adoration, but here of astonishment. It is probable that he was mounted, as Balaam, when he went to curse Israel, and perhaps better mounted than he; for Saul was now in a public post, was in haste, and the journey was long, so that it is not likely he should travel on foot. The sudden light would frighten the beast he rode on, and make it throw him; and it was God's good providence that his body got no hurt by the fall: but angels had a particular charge concerning him, to keep all his bones, so that not one of them was broken. It appears (ch. xxvi. 14) that all that were with him fell to the earth as well as he, but the design was upon him. This may be considered, (1.) As the effect of Christ's appearing to him, and of the light which shone round about him. Note, Christ's manifestations of himself to poor souls are humbling; they lay them very low, in mean thoughts of themselves, and a humble submission to the will of God. *Now mine eyes see thee*, saith Job, *I abhor myself*. *I saw the Lord*, saith Isaiah, *sitting upon a throne, and I said, Woe is me, for I am undone*. (2.) As a step towards this intended advancement. He is designed not only to be a Christian, but to be a minister, an apostle, a great apostle, and therefore he must thus be cast down. Note, Those whom Christ designs for the greatest honours are commonly first laid low. Those who are designed to excel in knowledge and grace are commonly laid low first, in a sense of their own ignorance and sinfulness. Those whom God will employ are first struck with a sense of their unworthiness to be employed.

4. The arraignment of Saul. Being by the fall taken into custody, and as it were set to the bar, he heard a voice saying to him (and it was distinguishing, to him only, for though those that were with him heard a sound (v. 7) yet they knew not the words, ch. xxii. 9), *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Observe here,

(1.) Saul not only saw a light from heaven, but heard a voice from heaven; wherever the glory of God was seen, the word of God was heard (Exod. xx. 18); and to Moses (Num. vii. 89); and to the prophets. God's manifestations of himself were never dumb shows, for he magnifies his word above all his name, and what was seen was always designed to make way for what was said. Saul heard a voice. Note, Faith comes by hearing; hence the Spirit is said to be received by the hearing of faith, Gal. iii. 2. The voice he heard was the voice of Christ. When he saw that just One, he heard the voice of his mouth, ch. xxii. 14. Note, The word we hear is likely to profit us when we hear it



as the voice of Christ, 1 Thess. ii. 13. *It is the voice of my beloved*; no voice but his can reach the heart. Seeing and hearing are the two learning senses; Christ here, by both these doors, entered into Saul's heart.

(2.) What he heard was very awakening.

[1.] He was called by his name, and that doubled: *Saul, Saul*. Some think, in calling him Saul, he hints at that great persecutor of David whose name he bore. He was indeed a second Saul, and such an enemy to the Son of David as the other was to David. Calling him by his name intimates the particular regard that Christ had to him: *I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me*, Isa. xlv. 4. See Exod. xxxiii. 12. His calling him by name brought the conviction home to his conscience, and put it past dispute to whom the voice spoke this. Note, What God speaks in general is then likely to do us good when we apply it to ourselves, and insert our own names into the precepts and promises which are expressed generally, as if God spoke to us by name, and when he saith, *Ho, every one*, he had said, *Ho, such a one: Samuel, Samuel; Saul, Saul*. The doubling of it, *Saul, Saul*, intimates, *First*, The deep sleep that Saul was in; he needed to be called again and again, as Jer. xxii. 29, *O earth, earth, earth*. *Secondly*, The tender concern that the blessed Jesus had for him, and for his recovery. He speaks as one in earnest; it is like *Martha, Martha* (Luke x. 41), or *Simon, Simon* (Luke xxii. 31), or *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, Matt. xxiii. 37. He speaks to him as to one in imminent danger, at the pit's brink, and just ready to drop in: *"Saul, Saul, dost thou know whither thou art going, or what thou art doing?"*

[2.] The charge exhibited against him is, *Why persecutest thou me?* Observe here; *First*, Before Saul was made a saint, he was made to see himself a sinner, a great sinner, a sinner against Christ. Now he was made to see that evil in himself which he never saw before; sin revived and he died. Note, A humbling conviction of sin is the first step towards a saving conversion from sin. *Secondly*, He is convinced of one particular sin, which he was most notoriously guilty of, and had justified himself in, and thereby way is made for his conviction of all the rest. *Thirdly*, The sin he is convinced of is persecution: *Why persecutest thou me?* It is a very affectionate expostulation, enough to melt a heart of stone. Observe, 1. The person sinning: "It is thou; thou, that art not one of the ignorant, rude, unthinking crowd, that will run down any thing they hear put into an ill name, but thou that hast had a liberal learned education, hast good parts and accomplishments, hast the knowledge of the scriptures, which, if duly considered, would show thee the folly of it. It is worse in thee than in another." 2. The person sinned against: "It is I, who never did thee any harm, who came from heaven to

earth to do thee good, who was not long since crucified for thee; and was not that enough, but must I afresh be crucified by thee?" 3. The kind and continuance of the sin. It was persecution, and he was at this time engaged in it: "Not only thou hast persecuted, but thou persecutest, thou persistest in it." He was not at this time haling any to prison, nor killing them; but this was the errand he came upon to Damascus; he was now projecting it, and pleasing himself with the thought of it. Note, Those that are designing mischief are, in God's account, doing mischief. 4. The question put to him upon it: "Why dost thou do it?" (1.) It is complaining language. "Why dealest thou thus unjustly, thus unkindly, with my disciples?" Christ never complained so much of those who persecuted him in his own person as he did here of those who persecuted him in his followers. He complains of it as it was Saul's sin: "Why art thou such an enemy to thyself, to thy God?" Note, The sins of sinners are a very grievous burden to the Lord Jesus. He is grieved for them (Mark iii. 5), he is pressed under them, Amos ii. 13. (2.) It is convincing language: "Why dost thou thus? Canst thou give any good reason for it?" Note, It is good for us often to ask ourselves why we do so and so, that we may discern what an unreasonable thing sin is: and of all sins none so unreasonable, so unaccountable, as the sin of persecuting the disciples of Christ, especially when it is discovered to be, as certainly it is, persecuting Christ. Those have no knowledge who eat up God's people, Ps. xiv. 4. *Why persecutest thou me?* He thought he was persecuting only a company of poor, weak, silly people, that were an offence and eye-sore to the Pharisees, little imagining that it was one in heaven that he was all this while insulting; for surely, if he had known, he would not have persecuted the Lord of glory. Note, Those who persecute the saints persecute Christ himself, and he takes what is done against them as done against himself, and accordingly will be the judgment in the great day, Matt. xxv. 45.

5. Saul's question upon his indictment, and the reply to it, v. 5.

(1.) He makes enquiry concerning Christ: *Who art thou, Lord?* He gives no direct answer to the charge preferred against him, being convicted by his own conscience, and self-condemned. If God contend with us for our sins, we are not able to answer for one of a thousand, especially such a one as the sin of persecution. Convictions of sin; when they are set home with power upon the conscience, will silence all excuses and self-justifications. *Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer.* But he desires to know who is his judge; the compellation is respectful: *Lord*. He who had been a blasphemer of Christ's name now speaks to him as his Lord. The question is proper: *Why*



art thou? This implies his present unacquaintedness with Christ; he knew not his voice as his own sheep do, but he desired to be acquainted with him; he is convinced by this light which encloses him that it is one from heaven that speaks to him, and he has a veneration for every thing that appears to him to come from heaven; and therefore, *Lord, who art thou? What is thy name?* Judg. xiii. 17; Gen. xxxii. 29. Note, There is some hope of people when they begin to enquire after Jesus Christ.

(2.) He has an answer immediately, in which we have,

[1.] Christ's gracious revelation of himself to him. He is always ready to answer the serious enquiries of those who covet an acquaintance with him. *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* The name of Jesus was not unknown to him; his heart had risen against it many a time, and gladly would he bury it in oblivion. He knew it was the name that he persecuted, but little did he think to hear it from heaven, or from the midst of such a glory as now shone round about him. Note, Christ brings souls into fellowship with himself by manifesting himself to them. He said, *First, I am Jesus, a Saviour; I am Jesus of Nazareth*, so it is, ch. xxii. 8. Saul used to call him so when he blasphemed him: "I am that very Jesus whom thou usedst to call in scorn *Jesus of Nazareth*." And he would show that now that he is in his glory he is not ashamed of his humiliation. *Secondly, "I am that Jesus whom thou persecutest*, and therefore it will be at thy peril if thou persist in this wicked course." There is nothing more effectual to awaken and humble the soul than to see sin to be against Christ, an affront to him, and a contradiction to his designs.

[2.] His gentle reproof of him: *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks, or goads*—to spurn at the spur. It is hard, it is in itself an absurd and evil thing, and will be of fatal consequence to him that does it. Those kick at the goad that stifle and smother the convictions of conscience, that rebel against God's truths and laws, that quarrel with his providences, and that persecute and oppose his ministers, because they reprove them, and their words are as goads and as nails. Those that revolt more and more when they are stricken by the word or rod of God, that are enraged at reproofs and fly in the face of their reprovers, kick against the pricks and will have a great deal to answer for.

6. His surrender of himself to the Lord Jesus at length, v. 6. See here,

(1.) The frame and temper he was in, when Christ had been dealing with him. [1.] He trembled, as one in a great fright. Note, Strong convictions, set home by the blessed Spirit, will make an awakened soul to tremble. How can those choose but tremble that are made to see the eternal God provoked against them, the whole crea-

tion at war with them, and their own souls upon the brink of ruin! [2.] He was astonished, was filled with amazement, as one brought into a new world, that knew not where he was. Note, The convincing, converting, work of Christ is astonishing to the awakened soul, and fills it with admiration. "What is this that God has done with me, and what will he do?"

(2.) His address to Jesus Christ, when he was in this frame: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* This may be taken, [1.] As a serious request for Christ's teachings: "Lord, I see I have hitherto been out of the way; thou hast shown me my error, set me to rights; thou hast discovered sin to me, discover to me the way to pardon and peace." It is like that, *Men and brethren, what must we do?* Note, A serious desire to be instructed by Christ in the way of salvation is an evidence of a good work begun in the soul. Or, [2.] As a sincere resignation of himself to the direction and government of the Lord Jesus. This was the first word that grace spoke in Paul, and with this began a spiritual life: Lord Jesus, *What wilt thou have me to do?* Did not he know what he had to do? Had he not his commission in his pocket? And what had he to do but to execute it? No, he had done enough of this work already, and resolves now to change his master, and employ himself better. Now it is not, What will the high priest and the elders have me to do? What will my own wicked appetites and passions have me to do? But, *What wilt thou have me to do?* The great change in conversion is wrought upon the will, and consists in the resignation of that to the will of Christ.

(3.) The general direction Christ gave him, in answer to this: *Arise, go into the city of Damascus*, which thou art now near to, *and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* It is encouragement enough to have further instruction promised him, but, [1.] He must not have it yet; it shall be told him shortly what he must do, but, for the present, he must pause upon what has been said to him, and improve that. Let him consider awhile what he has done in persecuting Christ, and be deeply humbled for that, and then he shall be told what he has further to do. [2.] He must not have it in this way, by a voice from heaven, for it is plain that he cannot bear it; he trembles, and is astonished. He shall be told therefore what he must do by a man like himself, whose terror shall not make him afraid, nor his hand be heavy upon him, which Israel desired at mount Sinai. Or, it is an intimation that Christ would take some other time to manifest himself further to him, when he was more composed, and this fright pretty well over. Christ manifests himself to his people by degrees; and both what he does and would he have them to do, though they know not now, they shall know hereafter.

7. How far his fellow travellers were affected with this, and what impression it made upon them. They fell to the earth, as he did, but rose without being bidden, which he did not, but lay still till it was said to him, *Arise*; for he lay under a heavier load than any of them did; but when they were up, (1.) *They stood speechless*, as men in confusion, and that was all, *v. 7.* They were going on the same wicked errand that Paul was, and perhaps, to the best of their power, were as spiteful as he; yet we do not find that any of them were converted, though they saw the light, and were struck down and struck dumb by it. No external means will of themselves work a change in the soul, without the Spirit and grace of God, which distinguish between some and others; among these that journeyed together, one is taken, and the others left. *They stood speechless*; none of them said, *Who art thou, Lord?* or, *What wilt thou have me to do?* as Paul did, but none of God's children are born dumb. (2.) *They heard a voice, but saw no man*; they heard Paul speak, but saw not him to whom he spoke, nor heard distinctly what was said to him: which reconciles it with what is said of this matter, *ch. xxii. 9.* where it is said, *They saw the light and were afraid* (which they might do and yet see no man in the light, as Paul did), and *that they heard not the voice of him that spoke to Paul*, so as to understand what he said, though they did hear a confused noise. Thus those who came hither to be the instruments of Paul's rage against the church serve for witnesses of the power of God over him.

8. What condition Saul was in after this, *v. 8.*  
 9. (1.) *He arose from the earth*, when Christ commanded him, but probably not without help, the vision had made him so faint and weak, I will not say like Belshazzar, when the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another, but like Daniel, when upon the sight of a vision no strength remained in him, *Dan. x. 16—17.*  
 (2.) *When his eyes were opened*, he found that his sight was gone, and *he saw no man*, none of the men that were with him, and began now to be busy about him. It was not so much this glaring light that, *by dazzling his eyes, had dimmed them—Nimium sensibile ledit sensum*; for then those with him would have lost their sight too; but it was a sight of Christ, whom the rest saw not, that had this effect upon him. Thus a believing sight of the glory of God in the face of Christ dazzles the eyes to all things here below. Christ, in order to the further discovery of himself and his gospel to Paul, took him off from the sight of other things, which he must look off, that he may look unto Jesus, and to him only. (3.) *They led him by the hand into Damascus*; whether to a public house, or to some friend's house, is not certain; but thus he who thought to have led the disciples of Christ prisoners

and captives to Jerusalem was himself led a prisoner and a captive to Christ into Damascus. He was thus taught what need he had of the grace of Christ to lead his soul (being naturally blind and apt to mistake) into all truth. (4.) *He lay without sight, and without food, neither did eat nor drink for three days, v. 9.* I do not think, as some do, that now he had his rapture into the third heavens, which he speaks of, *2 Cor. xii.* So far from this that we have reason to think he was all this time rather in the belly of hell, suffering God's terrors for his sins, which were now set in order before him: he was in the dark concerning his own spiritual state, and was so wounded in spirit for sin that he could relish neither meat nor drink.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. 17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19 And when he had received meat he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples



which were at Damascus. 20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

*As for God, his work is perfect; if he begin, he will make an end:* a good work was begun in Saul, when he was brought to Christ's feet, in that word, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* And never did Christ leave any that were brought to that. Though Saul was sadly mortified when he lay three days blind, yet he was not abandoned. Christ here takes care of the work of his own hands. He that hath torn will heal—that hath smitten will bind up—that hath convinced will comfort.

I. Ananias is here ordered to go and look after him, to heal and help him; for he that causeth grief will have compassion.

1. The person employed is *Ananias, a certain disciple at Damascus*, not lately driven thither from Jerusalem, but a native of Damascus; for it is said (*ch. xxii. 12*) that he had a good report of all the Jews who dwelt there, as a devout man according to the law; he had lately embraced the gospel, and given up his name to Christ, and, as it should seem, officiated as a minister, at least *pro hac vice*—on this occasion, though it does not appear that he was apostolically ordained. But why were not some of the apostles from Jerusalem sent for upon this great occasion, or Philip the evangelist, who had lately baptized the eunuch, and might have been fetched hither by the Spirit in a little time? Surely, because Christ would employ variety of hands in eminent services, that the honours might not be monopolized nor engrossed by a few,—because he would put work into the hands, and thereby put honour upon the heads, of those that were mean and obscure, to encourage them,—and because he would direct us to make much of the ministers that are where our lot is cast, if they have obtained mercy to be faithful, though they are not of the most eminent.

2. The direction given him is to go and enquire at such a house, probably an inn, for one *Saul of Tarsus*. Christ, in a vision, called to Ananias by name, *v. 10*. It is probable it was not the first time that he had heard the words of God, and seen the visions of the Almighty; for, without terror or confusion, he readily answers, "*Behold I am here, Lord, ready to go wherever*

thou sendest me, and to do whatever thou biddest me." Go then, saith Christ, *into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas* (where strangers used to lodge) *for one called Saul of Tarsus*. Note, Christ very well knows where to find out those that are his, in their distresses: when their relations, it may be, know not what is become of them, they have a friend in heaven, that knows in what street, in what house, nay, and which is more, in what frame they are: he knows their souls in adversity.

3. Two reasons are given him why he must go and enquire for this stranger, and offer him his service:—

(1.) Because he prays, and his coming to him must answer his prayer. This is a reason, [1.] Why Ananias needed not to be afraid of him, as we find he was, *v. 13, 14*. There is no question, saith Christ, but he is a true convert, *for behold he prayeth*. *Behold* denotes the certainty of it: "Assure thyself it is so; go and see." Christ was so pleased to find Paul praying that he must have others to take notice of it: *Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep which I had lost*. It denotes also the strangeness of it: "Behold, and wonder, that he who but the other day breathed nothing but threatenings and slaughter, now breathes nothing but prayer." But was it such a strange thing for Saul to pray? Was he not a Pharisee? and have we not reason to think he did, as the rest of them did, make long prayers in the synagogues and the corners of the streets? Yes; but now he began to pray after another manner than he had done; then he said his prayers, now he prayed them. Note, Regenerating grace evermore sets people on praying; you may as soon find a living man without breath as a living Christian without prayer; if breathless, lifeless; and so, if prayerless, graceless. [2.] As a reason why Ananias must go to him with all speed. It is no time to linger, *for behold he prayeth*: if the child cry, the tender nurse will hasten to it with the breast. Saul here, like Ephraim, is bemoaning himself, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and kicking against the goad. "Oh! go to him quickly, and tell him he is a dear son, a pleasant child, and since I spoke against him, for persecuting me, I do earnestly remember him still." Jer. xxxi. 18—20. Observe what condition Saul was now in. He was under conviction of sin, trembling and astonished; the setting of sin in order before us should drive us to prayer. He was under a bodily affliction, blind and sick; and, *Is any afflicted? Let him pray*. Christ had promised him that it should be further told him what he should do (*v. 6*), and he prays that one may be sent to him to instruct him. Note, What God has promised we must pray for; he will for this be enquired of, and particularly for divine instruction.

(2.) Because he hath seen in a vision such a man coming to him, to restore him to his



sight; and Ananias's coming to him must answer his dream, for it was of God (v. 12): *He hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias*, and just such a man as thou art, *coming in seasonably for his relief, and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight.* Now this vision which Paul had may be considered, [1.] As an immediate answer to his prayer, and the keeping up of that communion with God which he had entered into by prayer. He had, in prayer, spread the misery of his own case before God, and God presently manifests himself and the kind intentions of his grace to him; and it is very encouraging to know God's thoughts to us-ward: [2.] As designed to raise his expectations, and to make Ananias's coming more welcome to him. He would readily receive him as a messenger from God when he was told beforehand, in vision, that one of that name would come to him. See what a great thing it is to bring a spiritual physician and his patient together: here were two visions in order to it. When God, in his providence, does it without visions, brings a messenger to the afflicted soul, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, it must be acknowledged with thankfulness to his praise.

II. Ananias objects against going to him, and the Lord answers the objection. See how condescendingly the Lord admits his servant to reason with him.

1. Ananias pleads that this Saul was a notorious persecutor of the disciples of Christ, v. 13, 14. (1.) He had been so at Jerusalem: *"Lord, I have heard by many of this man, what a malicious enemy he is to the gospel of Christ: all those that were scattered upon the late persecution, many of whom are come to Damascus, tell how much evil he hath done to thy saints in Jerusalem, that he was the most virulent, violent persecutor of all, and a ringleader in the mischief—what havoc he has made in the church: there was no man they were more afraid of, no, not the high priest himself, than of Saul; nay,"* (2.) "His errand to Damascus at this time is to persecute us Christians: *Here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name, to treat the worshippers of Christ as the worst of criminals.*" Now, why does Ananias object this. Not, "Therefore I do not owe him so much service. Why should I do him a kindness who has done and designed us so much unkindness?" No, Christ has taught us another lesson, to render good for evil, and pray for our persecutors; but if he be such a persecutor of Christians, [1.] Will it be safe for Ananias to go to him? Will he not throw himself like a lamb into the mouth of a lion? And, if he thus bring himself into trouble, he will be blamed for his indiscretion. [2.] Will it be to any purpose to go to him? Can such a hard heart ever be softened, or such an Ethiopian ever change his skin?

2. Christ overrules the objection (v. 15, 16) "Do not tell me how bad he has been, I know it very well; but go thy way with all speed, and give him all the help thou canst, *for he is a chosen vessel, or instrument, unto me; I design to put confidence in him, and then thou needest not fear him.*" He was a vessel in which the gospel-treasure should be lodged, in order to the conveyance of it to many; an earthen vessel (2 Cor. iv. 7), but a chosen vessel. The vessel God uses he himself chooses; and it is fit he should himself have the choosing of the instruments he employs (John xv. 16): *You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.* He is a vessel of honour, and must not be neglected in his present forlorn condition, nor thrown away as a despised broken vessel, or a vessel in which there is no pleasure. He is designed, (1.) For eminent services: *He is to bear my name before the Gentiles*, is to be the apostle of the Gentiles, and to carry the gospel to heathen nations. Christ's name is the standard to which souls must be gathered, and under which they must be enlisted, and Saul must be a standard-bearer. He must bear Christ's name, must bear witness to it before kings, king Agrippa and Cæsar himself; nay, he must bear it before the children of Israel, though there were so many hands already at work about them. (2.) For eminent sufferings (v. 16): *I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* He that has been a persecutor shall be himself persecuted. Christ's showing him this intimates either his bringing him to these trials (as Ps. lx. 3), *Thou hast shown thy people hard things*, or his giving notice of them beforehand, that they might be no surprise to him. Note, Those that bear Christ's name must expect to bear the cross for his name; and those that do most for Christ are often called out to suffer most for him. Saul must suffer great things. This, one would think, was a cold comfort for a young convert; but it is only like telling a soldier of a bold and brave spirit, when he is enlisted, that he shall take the field, and enter upon action, shortly. Saul's sufferings for Christ shall redound so much to the honour of Christ and the service of the church, shall be so balanced with spiritual comforts and recompensed with eternal glories, that it is no discouragement to him to be told how great things he must suffer for Christ's name's sake.

III. Ananias presently goes on Christ's errand to Saul, and with good effect. He had started an objection against going to him, but, when an answer was given to it, he dropped it, and did not insist upon it. When difficulties are removed, what have we to do but to go on with our work, and not hang upon an objection?

1. Ananias delivered his message to Saul, v. 17. Probably he found him in bed, and applied to him as a patient. (1.) *He put his hands on him.* It was promised, as one of



the signs that should follow those that believe, that they should lay hands on the sick, and they should recover (Mark xvi. 18), and it was for that intent that he put his hands on him. Saul came to lay violent hands upon the disciples at Damascus, but here a disciple lays a helping healing hand upon him. *The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul.* (2.) He called him *brother*, because he was made a partaker of the grace of God, though not yet baptized; and his readiness to own him as a brother intimated to him God's readiness to own him as a son, though he had been a blasphemer of God and a persecutor of his children. (3.) He produces his commission from the same hand that had laid hold on him by the way, and now had him in custody. "*That same Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, and convinced thee of thy sin in persecuting him, has now sent me to thee to comfort thee.*" *Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit—The hand that wounded heals.* His light struck thee blind, but he hath sent me to thee that thou mightest receive thy sight; for the design was not to blind thine eyes, but to dazzle them, that thou mightest see things by another light: he that then put clay upon thine eyes hath sent me to wash them, that they may be cured." Ananias might deliver his message to Saul very appositely in the prophet's words (Hos. vi. 1, 2): *Come and turn to the Lord, for he hath torn and he will heal thee; he hath smitten, and he will bind thee up; now after two days he will revive thee, and the third day he will raise thee up, and thou shalt live in his sight.* Corrosives shall be no more applied, but lenitives. (4.) He assures him that he shall not only have his sight restored, but be filled with the Holy Ghost: he must himself be an apostle, and must in nothing come behind the chief of the apostles, and therefore must receive the Holy Ghost immediately, and not, as others did, by the interposition of the apostles; and Ananias's putting his hands upon him before he was baptized was for the conferring of the Holy Ghost.

2. Ananias saw the good issue of his mission. (1.) In Christ's favour to Saul. At the word of Ananias, Saul was discharged from his confinement by the restoring of his sight; for Christ's commission to open the prison to those that were bound (Isa. lxi. 1) is explained by the giving of sight to the blind, Luke iv. 18; *Isai. xlii. 7.* Christ's commission is to open the blind eyes, and to bring out the prisoners from the prison. Saul is delivered from the spirit of bondage by his receiving sight (v. 18), which was signified by the falling of scales from his eyes; and this immediately, and forthwith: the cure was sudden, to show that it was miraculous. This signified the recovering of him, [1.] From the darkness of his unconverted state. When he persecuted the church of God, and walked in the spirit and way of the

Pharisees, he was blind; he saw not the meaning either of the law or of the gospel, Rom. vii. 9. Christ often told the Pharisees that they were blind, and could not make them sensible of it; they said, *We see*, John ix. 41. Saul is saved from his Pharisaical blindness, by being made sensible of it. Note. Converting grace opens the eyes of the soul, and makes the scales to fall from them (*ch. xxvi. 18*), to open men's eyes, and turn them from darkness to light: this was what Saul was sent among the Gentiles to do, by the preaching of the gospel, and therefore must first experience it in himself. [2.] From the darkness of his present terrors, under the apprehension of guilt upon his conscience, and the wrath of God against him. This filled him with confusion, during those three days he sat in darkness, like Jonah for three days in the belly of hell; but now the scales fell from his eyes, the cloud was scattered, and the Sun of righteousness rose upon his soul, with healing under his wings. (2.) In Saul's subjection to Christ: He was baptized, and thereby submitted to the government of Christ, and cast himself upon the grace of Christ. Thus he was entered into Christ's school, hired into his family, enlisted under his banner, and joined himself to him for better for worse. The point was gained: it is settled; Saul is now a disciple of Christ, not only ceases to oppose him, but devotes himself entirely to his service and honour.

IV. The good work that was begun in Saul is carried on wonderfully; this new-born Christian, though he seemed as *one born out of due time*, yet presently comes to maturity.

1. He received his bodily strength, v. 19. He had continued three days fasting, which, with the mighty weight that was all that time upon his spirits, had made him very weak; but, *when he had received meat, he was strengthened*, v. 19. The Lord is for the body, and therefore care must be taken of it, to keep it in good plight, that it may be fit to serve the soul in God's service, and that Christ may be magnified in it, Phil. i. 20

2. He associated with the disciples that were at Damascus, fell in with them, conversed with them, went to their meetings, and joined in communion with them. He had lately *breathed out threatenings and slaughter against them*, but now breathes love and affection to them. Now *the wolf dwells with the lamb, and the leopard lies down with the kid*, Isa. xi. 6. Note. Those that take God for their God take his people for their people. Saul associated with the disciples, because now he saw an amiableness and excellency in them, because he loved them, and found that he improved in knowledge and grace by conversing with them; and thus he made profession of his Christian faith, and openly declared himself a disciple of Christ, by associating with those that were his disciples.

3 *He preached Christ in the synagogues,* v. 20. To this he had an extraordinary call, and for it an extraordinary qualification, God having immediately revealed his Son to him and in him, that he might preach him, Gal. i. 15, 16. He was so full of Christ himself, that *the Spirit within him constrained him to preach him to others, and, like Elihu, to speak that he might be refreshed,* Job xxxii. 20. Observe, (1.) Where he preached—in the synagogues of the Jews, for they were to have the first offer made them. The synagogues were their places of concourse; there he met with them together, and there they used to preach against Christ and to punish his disciples, by the same token that Paul himself had *punished them oft in every synagogue* (ch. xxvi. 11), and therefore there he would face the enemies of Christ where they were most daring, and openly profess Christianity where he had most opposed it. (2.) What he preached: *He preached Christ.* When he began to be a preacher, he fixed this for his principle, which he stuck to ever after: *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord;* nothing but Christ, and him crucified. He preached concerning Christ, *that he is the Son of God,* his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased, and with us in him, and not otherwise. (3.) How people were affected with it (v. 21): *All that heard him were amazed, and said, "Is not this he that destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and now does he call on this name himself, and persuade others to call upon it, and strengthen the hands of those that do?" Quantum mutatus ab illo!—Oh how changed! Is Saul also among the prophets?* Nay, did he not come hither for that intent, to seize all the Christians he could find, and *bring them bound to the chief priests?* Yes, he did. Who would have thought then that he would ever preach Christ as he does? Doubtless this was looked upon by many as a great confirmation of the truth of Christianity, that one who had been such a notorious persecutor of it came, on a sudden, to be such an intelligent, strenuous, and capacious preacher of it. This miracle upon the mind of such a man outshone the miracles upon men's bodies; and giving a man such another heart was more than giving men to speak with other tongues.

4. He confuted and confounded those that opposed the doctrine of Christ, v. 22. He signalized himself, not only in the pulpit, but in the schools, and showed himself supernaturally enabled, not only to preach the truth, but to maintain and defend it when he had preached it. (1.) He increased in strength. He became more intimately acquainted with the gospel of Christ, and his pious affections grew more strong. He grew more bold and daring and resolute in defence of the gospel: *He increased the more for the reflections that were cast upon him* (v. 21), in which his new friends upbraided him as having been a persecutor, and his old

friends upbraided him as being now a turncoat; but Saul, instead of being discouraged by the various remarks made upon his conversion, was thereby so much the more emboldened, finding he had enough at hand wherewith to answer the worst they could say to him. (2.) He ran down his antagonists, and *confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus;* he silenced them, and shamed them—answered their objections to the satisfaction of all indifferent persons, and pressed them with arguments which they could make no reply to. In all his discourses with the Jews he was still *proving that this Jesus is very Christ, is the Christ, the anointed of God, the true Messiah promised to the fathers.* He was proving it, *συμβάλλων—affirming it and confirming it,* teaching with persuasion. And we have reason to think he was instrumental in converting many to the faith of Christ, and building up the church at Damascus, which he went thither to make havoc of. Thus *out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.*

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. 26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. 29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. 30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. 31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Luke here makes no mention of Paul's journey into Arabia, which he tells us himself was immediately after his conversion, Gal. i



16 17. As soon as God had revealed his Son in him, that he might preach him, he went not up to Jerusalem, to receive instructions from the apostles (as any other convert would have done, that was designed for the ministry), but he went to Arabia, where there was new ground to break up, and where he would have opportunity of teaching, but not of learning; thence he returned to Damascus, and there, three years after his conversion, this happened, which is here recorded.

I. He met with difficulties at Damascus, and had a narrow escape of being killed there. Observe, 1. What his danger was (v. 23): *The Jews took counsel to kill him*, being more enraged at him than at any other of the preachers of the gospel, not only because he was more lively and zealous in his preaching than any of them, and more successful, but because he had been such a remarkable deserter, and his being a Christian was a testimony against them. It is said (v. 24), *The Jews watched the gates day and night to kill him*; they incensed the governor against him, as a dangerous man, who therefore kept the city with a guard to apprehend him, at his going out or coming in, 2 Cor. xi. 32. Now Christ showed Paul *what great things he must suffer for his name* (v. 16), when here was presently the government in arms against him, which was a great thing, and, as all his other sufferings afterwards, helped to make him considerable. Saul was no sooner a Christian than a preacher, no sooner a preacher than a sufferer; so quickly did he rise to the summit of his preferment. Note, Where God gives great grace he commonly exercises it with great trials. 2. How he was delivered. (1.) The design against him was discovered: *Their lying in wait was known of Saul*, by some intelligence, whether from heaven or from men we are not told. (2.) The disciples contrived to help him away—hid him, it is likely, by day; and in the night, the gates being watched, that he could not get away through them, *they let him down by the wall, in a basket*, as he himself relates it (2 Cor. xi. 33), *so he escaped out of their hands*. This story, as it shows us that when we enter into the way of God we must look for temptation, and prepare accordingly, so it shows us that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may not be by it deterred nor driven from the way of God.

II. He met with difficulties at Jerusalem the first time he went thither, v. 26. He came to Jerusalem. This is thought to be that journey to Jerusalem of which he himself speaks (Gal. i. 18): *After three years I went up to Jerusalem*, saith he, *to see Peter*, and *abode with him fifteen days*. But I rather incline to think that this was a journey before that, because *his coming in and going out, his preaching and disputing* (v. 28, 29), seem to be more than would consist with his fifteen days' stay (for that was no more) and to

require a longer time; and, besides, now he came a stranger, but then he came, *ιστορήσας Πέτρον*—*to confer with Peter*, as one he was intimate with; however, it might possibly be the same. Now observe,

1. How shy his friends were of him (v. 26): *When he came to Jerusalem*, he did not go to the chief priests and the Pharisees (he had taken his leave of them long since), but *he assayed to join himself to the disciples*. Wherever he came, he owned himself one of that despised persecuted people, and associated with them. They were now in his eyes *the excellent ones of the earth, in whom was all his delight*. He desired to be acquainted with them, and to be admitted into communion with them; but they looked strange upon him, shut the door against him, and would not go about any of their religious exercises if he were by, for *they were afraid of him*. Now might Paul be tempted to think himself in an ill case, when the Jews had abandoned and persecuted him, and the Christians would not receive and entertain him. Thus does he fall into divers temptations, and needs the armour of righteousness, as we all do, both on the right hand and on the left, that we may not be discouraged either by the unjust treatment of our enemies or the unkind treatment of our friends. (1.) See what was the cause of their jealousy of him: *They believed not that he was a disciple*, but that he only pretended to be so, and came among them as a spy or an informer. They knew what a bitter persecutor he had been, with what fury he went to Damascus some time ago; they had heard nothing of him since, and therefore thought he was but a wolf in sheep's clothing. The disciples of Christ had need to be cautious whom they admit into communion with them. *Believe not every spirit*. There is need of the wisdom of the serpent, to keep the mean between the extremes of suspicion on the one hand and credulity on the other; yet methinks it is safer to err on the charitable side, because it is an adjudged case that it is better the tares should be found among the wheat than that the wheat should any of it be rooted up and thrown out of the field. (2.) See how it was removed (v. 27): *Barnabas took him to the apostles themselves*, who were not so scrupulous as the inferior disciples, to whom he first assayed to join himself, and he declared to them, [1.] What Christ had done for him: *He had shown himself to him in the way and spoken to him*; and what he said. [2.] What he had since done for Christ: *He had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus*. How Barnabas came to know this, more than the rest of them, we are not told; whether he had himself been at Damascus, or had had letters thence, or discoursed with some of that city, by which he came to the knowledge of this; or whether he had formerly been acquainted with Paul in the Grecian synagogues, or at the feet of Gamaliel, and had such an account



of his conversion from himself as he saw cause enough to give credit to: but so it was that, being satisfied himself, he gave satisfaction to the apostles concerning him, he having brought no testimonials from the disciples at Damascus, thinking *he needed not, as some others, epistles of commendation*, 2 Cor. iii. 1. Note, The introducing of a young convert into the communion of the faithful is a very good work, and one which, as we have opportunity, we should be ready to do.

2. How sharp his enemies were upon him.

(1.) He was admitted into the communion of the disciples, which was no little provocation to his enemies. It vexed the unbelieving Jews to see Saul a trophy of Christ's victory, and a captive to his grace, who had been such a champion for their cause—to see him *coming in, and going out, with the apostles* (v. 28), and to hear them glorying in him, or rather glorifying God in him. (2.) He appeared vigorous in the cause of Christ, and this was yet more provoking to them (v. 29): *He spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus*. Note, Those that speak for Christ have reason to speak boldly; for they have a good cause, and speak for one who will at last speak for himself and them too. The Grecians, or Hellenist Jews, were most offended at him, because he had been one of them; and they drew him into a dispute, in which, no doubt, he was too hard for them, as he had been for the Jews at Damascus. One of the martyrs said, Though she could not dispute for Christ, she could die for Christ; but Paul could do both. Now the Lord Jesus divided the spoils of the strong man armed in Saul. For that same natural quickness and fervour of spirit which, while he was in ignorance and unbelief, made him a furious bigoted persecutor of the faith, made him a most zealous courageous defender of the faith. (3.) This brought him into peril of his life, with which he narrowly escaped: *The Grecians*, when they found they could not deal with him in disputation, contrived to silence him another way; *they went about to slay him*, as they did Stephen when *they could not resist the Spirit by which he spoke*, ch. vi. 10. That is a bad cause that has recourse to persecution for its last argument. But notice was given of this conspiracy too, and effectual care taken to secure this young champion (v. 30): *When the brethren knew what was designed against him they brought him down to Cesarea*. They remembered how the putting of Stephen to death, upon his disputing with the Grecians, had been the beginning of a sore persecution; and therefore were afraid of having such a vein opened again, and hastened Paul out of the way. He that flies may fight again. He that fled from Jerusalem might do service at Tarsus, the place of his nativity; and thither they desired him by all means to go, hoping he might there go on in his work with more safety than at Jerusalem. Yet it was also by direction from heaven that he left Jerusalem

at this time, as he tells us himself (ch. xxii. 17, 18), that Christ now appeared to him, and ordered him to *go quickly out of Jerusalem*, for he must be sent to the Gentiles, v. 15. Those by whom God has work to do shall be protected from all the designs of their enemies against them till it be done. Christ's witnesses cannot be slain till they have *finished their testimony*.

III. The churches had now a comfortable gleam of liberty and peace (v. 31): *Then had the churches rest*. Then, when Saul was converted, so some; when that persecutor was taken off, those were quiet whom he used to irritate, and then those were quiet whom he used to molest. Or, then, when he had gone from Jerusalem, the fury of the Grecian Jews was a little abated, and they were the more willing to bear with the other preachers now that Saul had gone out of the way. Observe,

1. *The churches had rest*. After a storm comes a calm. Though we are always to expect troublesome times, yet we may expect that they shall not last always. This was a breathing-time allowed them, to prepare them for the next encounter. The churches that were already planted were mostly in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, within the limits of the holy land. There were the first Christian churches, where Christ had himself laid the foundation.

2. They made a good use of this lucid interval. Instead of growing secure and wanton in the day of their prosperity, they abounded more in their duty, and made a good use of their tranquillity. (1.) *They were edified*, were built up in their most holy faith; the more free and constant enjoyment they had of the means of knowledge and grace, the more they increased in knowledge and grace. (2.) *They walked in the fear of the Lord*—were more exemplary themselves for a holy heavenly conversation. They so lived that all who conversed with them might say, Surely the fear of God reigns in those people. (3.) *They walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*—were not only faithful, but cheerful, in religion; they stuck to the ways of the Lord, and sang in those ways. *The comfort of the Holy Ghost* was their consolation, and that which they made their chief joy. They had recourse to the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and lived upon that, not only in days of trouble and affliction, but in days of rest and prosperity. The comforts of the earth, when they had the most free and full enjoyment of them, could not content them without the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Observe the connection of these two: when they walked *in the fear of the Lord*, then they walked *in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*. Those are most likely to walk cheerfully that walk circumspectly.

3. God blessed it to them for their increase in number: *They were multiplied*. Sometimes the church multiplies the more for its being afflicted, as Israel in Egypt; yet if it



were always so, the saints of the Most High would be worn out. At other times its rest contributes to its growth, as it enlarges the opportunity of ministers, and invites those in who at first are afraid of suffering. Or, then, when they walked in the fear of God and his comforts, they were multiplied. Thus those that will not be won by the word may be won by the conversation of professors.

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

Here we have, I. The visit Peter made to the churches that were newly planted by the dispersed preachers, v. 32. 1. He passed through all quarters. As an apostle, he was not to be the resident pastor of any one church, but the itinerant visitor of many churches, to confirm the doctrine of inferior preachers, to confer the Holy Ghost on those that believed, and to ordain ministers. He passed *διὰ πάντων*—among them all, who pertained to the churches of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, mentioned in the foregoing chapter. He was, like his Master, always upon the remove, and went about doing good; but still his head-quarters were at Jerusalem, for there we shall find him imprisoned, ch. xii. 2. He came to the saints at Lydda. This seems to be the same with Lod, a city in the tribe of Benjamin, mentioned 1 Chron. viii. 12; Ezra ii. 33. The Christians are called saints, not only some particular eminent ones, as saint Peter and saint Paul, but every sincere professor of the faith of Christ. These are the saints on the earth, Ps. xvi. 3.

II. The cure Peter wrought on Eneas, a man that had been bedridden eight years, v. 33. 1. His case was very deplorable: He was sick of the palsy, a dumb palsy, perhaps a dead palsy. The disease was extreme, for he kept his bed; it was inveterate, for he kept his bed eight years; and we may suppose that both he himself and all about him despaired of relief for him, and concluded upon no other than that he must still keep his bed till he removed to his grave. Christ chose such patients as this, whose disease was incurable in a course of nature, to show how desperate the case of fallen mankind was when he undertook their cure. When we were without strength, as this poor man, he sent his word to heal us. 2. His cure was very admirable, v. 34. (1.) Peter interested

Christ in his case, and engaged him for his relief: Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. Peter does not pretend to do it himself by any power of his own, but declares it to be Christ's act and deed, directs him to look up to Christ for help, and assures him of an immediate cure—not, "He will make thee," but, "He does make thee, whole;" and a perfect cure—not, "He makes thee easy," but "He makes thee whole." He does not express himself by way of prayer to Christ that he would make him whole, but as one having authority from Christ, and that knew his mind, he declares him made whole. (2.) He ordered him to bestir himself, to exert himself: "Arise and make thy bed, that all may see thou art thoroughly cured." Let none say that because it is Christ that by the power of his grace works all our works in us therefore we have no work, no duty, to do for, though Jesus Christ makes thee whole, yet thou must arise and make use of the power he gives thee: "Arise, and make thy bed, to be to thee no longer a bed of sickness, but a bed of rest." (3.) Power went along with this word: he arose immediately, and no doubt very willingly made his own bed.

III. The good influence this had upon many (v. 35): All that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord. We can scarcely think that every individual person in those countries took cognizance of the miracle, and was wrought upon by it; but many, the generality of the people in the town of Lydda and in the country of Saron, or Sharon, a fruitful plain or valley, of which it was foretold, Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, Isa. lxi. 10. 1. They all made enquiry into the truth of the miracle, did not overlook it, but saw him that was healed, and saw that it was a miraculous cure that was wrought upon him by the power of Christ, in his name, and with a design to confirm and ratify that doctrine of Christ which was now preached to the world. 2. They all submitted to the convincing proof and evidence there was in this of the divine origin of the Christian doctrine, and turned to the Lord, to the Lord Jesus. They turned from Judaism to Christianity; they embraced the doctrine of Christ, and submitted to his ordinances, and turned themselves over to him to be ruled and taught and saved by him.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works, and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that

Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. 43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

Here we have another miracle wrought by Peter, for the confirming of the gospel, and which exceeded the former—the raising of Tabitha to life when she had been for some time dead. Here is,

I. The life, and death, and character of Tabitha, on whom this miracle was wrought, v. 36, 37. 1. She lived at Joppa, a sea-port town in the tribe of Dan, where Jonah took shipping to go to Tarshish, now called *Japho*. 2. Her name was *Tabitha*, a Hebrew name, the Greek for which is *Dorcas*, both signifying a *doe*, or *hind*, or *deer*, a pleasant creature. *Naphtali* is compared to a *hind* let loose, giving goodly words; and the wife to the kind and tender husband is as the loving *hind*, and as the pleasant *roe*, Prov. v. 19. 3. She was a disciple, one that had embraced the faith of Christ and was baptized; and not only so, but was eminent above many for works of charity. She showed her faith by her works, her good works, which she was full of; that is, in which she abounded. Her head was full of cares and contrivances which way she should do good. She *devised liberal things*, Isa. xxxii. 8. Her hands were full of good employment; she made a business of doing good, was never idle, having learned to *maintain good works* (Tit. iii. 8), to keep up a constant course and method of them. She was *full of good works*, as a tree that is full of fruit. Many are full of good words, who are empty and barren in good works; but Tabitha was a great doer, no great talker: *Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus—We do not talk great things, but we live them*. Among other good works, she was remarkable for her *alms-deeds which she*

*did*, not only her works of piety, which are good works and the fruits of faith, but works of charity and beneficence, flowing from love to her neighbour and a holy contempt of this world. Observe, She is commended not only for the alms which she gave, but for the alms-deeds which she did. Those that have not estates wherewith to give in charity may yet be able to do in charity, working with their hands, or walking with their feet, for the benefit of the poor. And those who will not do a charitable deed, whatever they may pretend, if they were rich would not bestow a charitable gift. She was full of alms-deeds, *ὡν ἰστοίη—which she made*; there is an emphasis upon her *doing* them, because what her hand found to do of this kind she did with all her might, and persevered in. They were alms-deeds, not which she purposed and designed and said she would do, but which she did; not which she began to do, but which she did, which she went through with, which she performed the doing of, 2 Cor. viii. 11; ix. 7. This is the life and character of a certain disciple, and should be of all the disciples of Christ; for, if we thus bear much fruit, then are we his disciples indeed, John xv. 8. 4. She was removed in the midst of her usefulness (v. 37): *In those days she fell sick, and died*. It is promised to those who consider the poor, not that they shall never be sick, but that the Lord will *strengthen them upon the bed of languishing*, at least with strength in their souls, and so will *make all their bed in their sickness*, will make it easy, Ps. xli. 1, 3. They cannot hope that they shall never die (*merciful men are taken away*, and merciful women too, witness Tabitha), but they may hope that they shall *find mercy of the Lord in that day*, 2 Tim. i. 18. 5. Her friends and those about her did not presently bury her, as usual, because they were in hopes Peter would come and raise her to life again; but they *washed the dead body*, according to the custom, which, it is said, was with warm water, which, if there were any life remaining in the body, would recover it; so that this was done to show that she was really and truly dead. They tried all the usual methods to bring her to life, and could not. *Conclamatum est—the last cry was uttered*. They *laid her out* in her grave-clothes in an upper chamber, which Dr. Lightfoot thinks was probably the public meeting-room for the believers of that town; and they laid the body there, that Peter, if he would come, might raise her to life the more solemnly in that place.

II. The request which her Christian friends sent to Peter to come to them with all speed, not to attend the funeral, but, if it might be, to prevent it, v. 38. Lydda, where Peter now was, was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples at Joppa had heard that Peter was there, and that he had raised Eneas from a bed of languishing; and therefore they *sent him two*



men, to make the message the more solemn and respectful, *desiring him that he would not delay to come to them*; not telling him the occasion, lest he should modestly decline coming upon so great an errand as to raise the dead: if they can but get him to them, they will leave it to him. Their friend was dead, and it was too late to send for a physician, but not too late to send for Peter. *Post mortem medicus—a physician after death*, is an absurdity, but not *Post mortem apostolus—an apostle after death*.

III. The posture in which he found the survivors, when he came to them (v. 39): *Peter arose and went with them*. Though they did not tell him what they wanted him for, yet he was willing to go along with them, believing it was upon some good account or other that he was sent for. Let not faithful ministers grudge to be at every body's beck, as far as they have ability, when the great apostle *made himself the servant of all*, 1 Cor. ix. 19. He found the corpse laid in the upper chamber, and attended by widows, probably such as were in the communion of the church, poor widows; there they were,

1. Commending the deceased—a good work, when there was that in them which was truly commendable, and worthy of imitation, and when it is done modestly and soberly, and without flattery of the survivors or any sinister intention, but purely for the glory of God and the exciting of others to that which is virtuous and praiseworthy. The commendation of Tabitha was like her own virtues, not in word, but in deed. Here were no encomiums of her in orations, nor poems inscribed to her memory; but *the widows showed the coats and garments which she made for them*, and bestowed upon them *while she was with them*. It was the comfort of Job, while he lived, that the loins of the poor blessed him, because they were warmed with the fleece of his sheep, Job xxxi. 20. And here it was the credit of Tabitha, when she was dead, that the backs of the widows praised her for the garments which she made them. And those are certainly best praised *whose own works praise them in the gates*, whether the words of others do or no. It is much more honourable to clothe a company of decrepit widows with needful clothing for night and day, who will pray for their benefactors when they do not see them, than to clothe a company of lazy footmen with rich liveries, who perhaps behind their backs will curse those that clothe them (Eccl. vii. 21); and it is what all that are wise and good will take a greater pleasure in, for goodness is true greatness, and will pass better in the account shortly. Observe, (1.) Into what channel Tabitha turned much of her charity. Doubtless there were other instances of her alms-deeds which she did, but this was now produced; she did, as it should seem with her own hands, *make coats and garments for poor widows*, who perhaps with their own labour

could make a shift to get their bread, but could not earn enough to buy clothes. And this is an excellent piece of charity, *If thou seest the naked, that thou cover him* (Isa. lviii. 7), and not think it enough to say, *Be ye warmed*, James ii. 15, 16. (2.) What a grateful sense the poor had of her kindness: *They showed the coats*, not ashamed to own that they were indebted to her for the clothes on their backs. Those are horribly ungrateful indeed who have kindness shown them and will not make at least an acknowledgment of it, by showing the kindness that is done them, as these widows here did. Those who receive alms are not obliged so industriously to conceal it, as those are who give alms. When the poor reflect upon the rich as uncharitable and unmerciful, they ought to reflect upon themselves, and consider whether they are not unthankful and ungrateful. Their showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made tended to the praise not only of her charity, but of her industry, according to the character of the virtuous woman, that *she lays her hands to the spindle*, or at least to the needle, and then *stretches out her hand to the poor*, and *reaches forth her hands to the needy*, of what she has worked; and, when God and the poor have thus had their due, *she makes herself coverings of tapestry and her own clothing is silk and purple*, Prov. xxxi. 19—22.

2. They were here lamenting the loss of her: The widows stood by Peter, weeping. When the merciful are taken away, it should be laid to heart, especially by those to whom they have been in a particular manner merciful. They need not weep for her; she is taken from the evil to come, *she rests from her labours and her works follow her*, besides those she leaves behind her: but they weep for themselves and for their children, who will soon find the want of such a good woman, that has not left her fellow. Observe, They take notice of what good Dorcas did *while she was with them*; but now she is gone from them, and this is their grief. Those that are charitable will find that the *poor they have always with them*; but it is well if those that are poor find that they have always the charitable with them. We must make a good use of the lights that yet a little while are with us, because they will not be always with us, will not be long with us: and when they are gone we shall think what they did when they were with us. It should seem, the widows wept before Peter, as an inducement to him, if he could do any thing, to have compassion on them and help them, and restore one to them that used to have compassion on them. When charitable people are dead, there is no praying them to life again; but, when they are sick, this piece of gratitude is owing them, to pray for their recovery, that, if it be the will of God, those may be spared to live who can ill be spared to die.

IV. The manner in which she was raised to



life 1 Privately: She was laid in the upper room where they used to have their public meetings, and, it should seem, there was great crowding about the dead body, in expectation of what would be done; *but Peter put them all forth*, all the weeping widows, all but some few relations of the family, or perhaps the heads of the church, to join with him in prayer; as Christ did, Matt. ix. 25. Thus Peter declined every thing that looked like vainglory and ostentation; they came to see, but he did not come to be seen. He put them all forth, that he might with the more freedom pour out his soul before God in prayer upon this occasion, and not be disturbed with their noisy and clamorous lamentations. 2. By prayer: In his healing Eneas there was an implied prayer, but in this greater work he addressed himself to God by solemn prayer, as Christ when he raised Lazarus; but Christ's prayer was with the authority of a Son, who quickens whom he will; Peter's with the submission of a servant, who is under direction, and therefore he *knelt down and prayed*. 3. By the word, a quickening word, a word which is spirit and life: *He turned to the body*, which intimates that when he prayed he turned from it; lest the sight of it should discourage his faith, he looked another way, to teach us, like Abraham, *against hope, to believe in hope*, and overlook the difficulties that lie in the way, *not considering the body as now dead*, lest we should stagger at the promise, Rom. iv. 19, 20. But, when he had prayed, he *turned to the body*, and spoke in his Master's name, according to his example: "*Tabitha, arise; return to life again.*" Power went along with this word, and she came to life, *opened her eyes* which death had closed. Thus, in the raising of dead souls to spiritual life, the first sign of life is the opening of the eyes of the mind, ch. xxvi. 18. When she saw Peter, she sat up, to show that she was really and truly alive; and (v. 41) he *gave her his hand and lifted her up*, not as if she laboured under any remaining weakness, but thus he would as it were welcome her to life again, and give her the right hand of fellowship among the living, from whom she had been cut off. And, *lastly*, he *called the saints and widows*, who were all in sorrow for her death, and *presented her alive* to them, to their great comfort, particularly of the widows, who laid her death much to heart (v. 41); to them he presented her, as Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 23), and Elisha (2 Kings iv. 36), and Christ (Luke vii. 15), presented the dead sons alive to their mothers. The greatest joy and satisfaction are expressed by life from the dead.

V. The good effect of this miracle. 1. Many were by it convinced of the truth of the gospel, that it was from heaven, and not of men, and believed in the Lord, v. 42. The thing was *known throughout all Joppa*; it would be in every body's mouth quickly,

and, it being a town of seafaring men, the notice of it would be the sooner carried thence to other countries, and though some never minded it many were wrought upon by it. This was the design of miracles, to confirm a divine revelation. 2. Peter was hereby induced to continue some time in this city, v. 43. Finding that a door of opportunity was opened for him there, he tarried there many days, till he was sent thence, and sent for thence upon business to another place. He tarried not in the house of Tabitha, though she was rich, lest he should seem to seek his own glory; but he took up his lodgings with one Simon a tanner, an ordinary tradesman, which is an instance of his condescension and humility: and hereby he has taught us not to *mind high things*, but to *condescend to those of low estate*, Rom. xii. 16. And, though Peter might seem to be buried in obscurity here in the house of a poor tanner by the sea-side, yet hence God fetched him to a noble piece of service, which is recorded in the next chapter; *for those that humble themselves shall be exalted*.

## CHAP. X.

It is a turn very new and remarkable which the story of this chapter gives to the Acts of the apostles; hitherto, both at Jerusalem and every where else where the ministers of Christ came, they preached the gospel only to the Jews, or those Greeks that were circumcised and proselyted to the Jews' religion; but now, "*Lo, we turn to the Gentiles*;" and to them the door of faith is here opened; good news indeed to us sinners of the Gentiles. The apostle Peter is the man that is first employed to admit uncircumcised Gentiles into the Christian church; and Cornelius, a Roman centurion or colonel, is the first that with his family and friends is so admitted. Now here we are told, I. How Cornelius was directed by a vision to send for Peter, and did send for him accordingly, ver. 1—8. II. How Peter was directed by a vision to go to Cornelius, though he was a Gentile, without making any scruple of it, and did go accordingly, ver. 9—23. III. The happy interview between Peter and Cornelius at Cæsarea, ver. 24—33. IV. The sermon Peter preached in the house of Cornelius to him and to his friends, ver. 34—43. V. The baptizing of Cornelius and his friends with the Holy Ghost first, and then with water, ver. 44—48.

THERE was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed,



he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8 And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

The bringing of the gospel to the Gentiles, and the bringing of those who had been strangers and foreigners to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, were such a mystery to the apostles themselves, and such a surprise (Eph. iii. 3, 6), that it concerns us carefully to observe all the circumstances of the beginning of this great work, this part of the *mystery of godliness*—*Christ preached to the Gentiles, and believed on in the world*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. It is not unlikely that some Gentiles might before now have stepped into a synagogue of the Jews, and heard the gospel preached; but the gospel was never yet designedly preached to the Gentiles, nor any of them baptized—Cornelius was the first; and here we have,

I. An account given us of this Cornelius, who and what he was, who was the first-born of the Gentiles to Christ. We are here told that he was a great man and a good man—two characters that seldom meet, but here they did; and where they do meet they put a lustre upon each other: goodness makes greatness truly valuable, and greatness makes goodness much more serviceable. 1. Cornelius was an officer of the army, v. 1. He was at present quartered in Cesarea, a strong city, lately re-edified and fortified by Herod the Great, and called *Cesarea* in honour of Augustus Cæsar. It lay upon the sea-shore, very convenient for the keeping up of a correspondence between Rome and its conquests in those parts. The Roman governor or proconsul ordinarily resided here, ch. xxiii. 23, 24; xxv. 6. Here there was a band, or cohort, or regiment, of the Roman army, which probably was the governor's life-guard, and is here called *the Italian band*, because, that they might be the more sure of their fidelity, they were all native Romans, or Italians. Cornelius had a command in this part of the army. His name, *Cornelius*, was much used among the Romans, among some of the most ancient and noble families. He was an officer of considerable rank and figure, a centurion. We read of one of that rank in our Saviour's time, of whom he gave a great commendation, Matt. viii. 10. When a Gentile must be pitched upon to receive the gospel first, it is not a Gentile philosopher, much less a Gentile priest (who are bigoted to their notions and worship, and prejudiced against the gospel of Christ), but a Gentile soldier, who is a man of more free thought; and he that truly is so, when the Christian doctrine is fairly set before him, cannot but receive it and bid it welcome. Fishermen, unlearned and ignorant men, were the first of the Jew-

ish converts, but not so of the Gentiles; for the world shall know that the gospel has that in it which may recommend it to men of polite learning and a liberal education, as we have reason to think this centurion was. Let not soldiers and officers of the army plead that their employment frees them from the restraints which some others are under, and, giving them an opportunity of living more at large, may excuse them if they be not religious; for here was an officer of the army that embraced Christianity, and yet was neither turned out of his place nor turned himself out. And, *lastly*, it was a mortification to the Jews that not only the Gentiles were taken into the church, but that the first who was taken in was an officer of the Roman army, which was to them *the abomination of desolation*. 2. He was, according to the measure of the light he had, a religious man. It is a very good character that is given of him, v. 2. He was no idolater, no worshipper of false gods or images, nor allowed himself in any of those immoralities to which the greater part of the Gentile world were given up, to punish them for their idolatry. (1.) He was possessed with a principle of regard to the true and living God. He was a *devout man and one that feared God*. He believed in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and had a reverence for his glory and authority, and a dread of offending him by sin; and, though he was a soldier, it was no diminution to the credit of his valour to tremble before God. (2.) He kept up religion in his family. He *feared God with all his house*. He would not admit any idolaters under his roof, but took care that not himself only, but all his, should serve the Lord. Every good man will do what he can that those about him may be good too. (3.) He was a very charitable man. He *gave much alms to the people*, the people of the Jews, notwithstanding the singularities of their religion. Though he was a Gentile, he was willing to contribute to the relief of one that was a real object of charity, without asking what religion he was of. (4.) He was much in prayer: He *prayed to God always*. He kept up stated times for prayer, and was constant to them. Note, Wherever the fear of God rules in the heart, it will appear both in works of charity and of piety, and neither will excuse us from the other.

II. The orders given him from heaven, by the ministry of an angel, to send for Peter to come to him, which he would never have done if he had not been thus directed to do it. Observe,

1. How, and in what way, these orders were given him. He had a vision, in which an angel delivered them to him. It was about the *ninth hour of the day*, at three of the clock in the afternoon, which is with us an hour of business and conversation; but then, because it was in the temple the time of offering the evening sacrifice, it was made by

devout people an *hour of prayer*, to intimate that all our prayers are to be offered up in the virtue of the great sacrifice. Cornelius was now at prayer: so he tells us himself, *v. 30*. Now here we are told, (1.) That an angel of God *came in to him*. By the brightness of his countenance, and the manner of his coming in, he knew him to be something more than a man, and therefore nothing less than an angel, an express from heaven. (2.) That he *saw him evidently* with his bodily eyes, not in a dream presented to his imagination, but in a vision presented to his sight; for his greater satisfaction, it carried its own evidence along with it. (3.) That he called him by his name, *Cornelius*, to intimate the particular notice God took of him. (4.) That this put Cornelius for the present into some confusion (*v. 4*): *When he looked on him he was afraid*. The wisest and best men have been struck with fear upon the appearance of any extraordinary messenger from heaven; and justly, for sinful man knows that he has no reason to expect any good tidings thence. And therefore Cornelius cries, "*What is it, Lord? What is the matter?*" This he speaks as one afraid of something amiss, and longing to be eased of that fear, by knowing the truth; or as one desirous to know the mind of God, and ready to comply with it, as Joshua: *What saith my Lord unto his servant?* And Samuel: *Speak, for thy servant heareth*.

2. What the message was that was delivered to him.

(1.) He is assured that God accepts him in walking according to the light he had (*v. 4*): *Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God*. Observe, Prayers and alms must go together. We must follow our prayers with alms; for the fact that God hath chosen is to *draw out the soul to the hungry*, Isa. lviii. 6, 7. It is not enough to pray that what we have may be sanctified to us, but we must *give alms of such things as we have*; and then, behold, all things are clean to us, Luke xi. 41. And we must follow our alms with our prayers that God would graciously accept them, and that they may be blessed to those to whom they are given. Cornelius prayed, and gave alms, not as the Pharisees, *to be seen of men*, but in sincerity, as unto God; and he is here told that they were *come up for a memorial before God*. They were upon record in heaven, in the book of remembrance that is written there for all that fear God, and shall be remembered to his advantage: "Thy prayers shall be answered, and thine alms recompensed." The sacrifices under the law are said to be *for a memorial*. See Lev. ii. 9, 16; v. 12; vi. 15. And prayers and alms are our spiritual offerings, which God is pleased to take cognizance of, and have regard to. The divine revelation communicated to the Jews, as far as the Gentiles were concerned in it, not only as it directed

and improved the light and law of nature, but as it promised a Messiah to come, Cornelius believed and submitted to. What he did he did in that faith, and was accepted of God in it; for the Gentiles, to whom the law of Moses came, were not obliged to become circumcised Jews, as those to whom the gospel of Christ comes are to become baptized Christians.

(2.) He is appointed to enquire after a further discovery of divine grace, now lately made to the world, *v. 5, 6*. He must *send forthwith to Joppa, and enquire for one Simon Peter; he lodgeth at the house of one Simon a tanner; his house is by the sea side*, and, if he be sent for, he will come; and *when he comes he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do*, in answer to thy question, *What is it, Lord?* Now here are two things very surprising, and worthy our consideration:—[1.] Cornelius prays and gives alms in the fear of God, is religious himself and keeps up religion in his family, and all this so as to be accepted of God in it, and yet there is something further that he ought to do—he ought to embrace the Christian religion, now that God has established it among men. Not, He may do it if he pleases; it will be an improvement and entertainment to him. But, He must do it; it is indispensably necessary to his acceptance with God for the future, though he has been accepted in his services hitherto. He that believed the promise of the Messiah must now believe the performance of that promise. Now that God has given a further record concerning his Son than what had been given in the Old-Testament prophecies he requires that we receive this when it is brought to us; and now neither our prayers nor our alms can come up for a memorial before God unless we believe in Jesus Christ, for it is that further which we ought to do. *This is his commandment, that we believe*. Prayers and alms are accepted from those that believe that the Lord is God, and have not opportunity of knowing more; but, from those to whom it is preached that Jesus is Christ, it is necessary to the acceptance of their persons, prayers, and alms, that they believe this, and rest upon him alone for acceptance. [2.] Cornelius has now an angel from heaven talking to him, and yet he must not receive the gospel of Christ from this angel, nor be told by him what he ought to do, but all that the angel has to say is, "Send for Peter, and he shall tell thee." As the former observation puts a mighty honour upon the gospel, so does this upon the gospel ministry: it was not to the highest of angels, but to those who were less than the least of all saints, that this grace was given, *to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ* (Eph. iii. 8), that the excellency of the power might be of God, and the dignity of an institution of Christ supported; for *unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come* (Heb.



ii. 5), but to the Son of man as the sovereign, and the sons of men as his agents and ministers of state, whose *terrors shall not make us afraid, nor their hand be heavy upon us*, as this angel's now was to Cornelius. And as it was an honour to the apostle that he must preach that which an angel might not, so it was a further honour that an angel was despatched on purpose from heaven to order him to be sent for. To bring a faithful minister and a willing people together is a work worthy of an angel, and what therefore the greatest of men should be glad to be employed in.

III. His immediate obedience to these orders, v. 7, 8. He sent with all speed to Joppa, to fetch Peter to him. Had he himself only been concerned, he would have gone to Joppa to him. But he had a family, and kinsmen, and friends (v. 24), a little congregation of them, that could not go with him to Joppa, and therefore he sends for Peter. Observe, 1. When he sent. As soon as ever the angel which spoke unto him had departed, without dispute or delay, he was obedient to the heavenly vision. He perceived, by what the angel said, he was to have some further work prescribed him, and he longed to have it told him. He made haste, and delayed not, to do this commandment. In any affair wherein our souls are concerned it is good for us not to lose time. 2. Whom he sent: *Two of his household servants*, who all feared God, and a devout soldier, one of those that waited on him continually. Observe, a devout centurion had devout soldiers. A little devotion commonly goes a great way with soldiers, but there would be more of it in the soldiers if there were but more of it in the commanders. Officers in an army, that have such a great power over the soldiers, as we find the centurion had (Matt. viii. 9), have a great opportunity of promoting religion, at least of restraining vice and profaneness, in those under their command, if they would but improve it. Observe, When this centurion had to choose some of his soldiers to attend his person, and to be always about him, he pitched upon such of them as were devout; they shall be preferred and countenanced, to encourage others to be so. He went by David's rule (Ps. ci. 6), *Mine eye shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me*. 3. What instructions he gave them (v. 8): *He declared all these things unto them*, told them of the vision he had, and the orders given him to send for Peter; because Peter's coming was a thing in which they were concerned, for they had souls to save as well as he. Therefore he does not only tell them where to find Peter (which he might have thought it enough to do—the servant knows not what his Lord doeth), but he tells them on what errand he was to come, that they might importune him.

9 On the morrow, as they went  
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on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. 17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, 18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

Cornelius had received positive orders from heaven to send for Peter, whom otherwise he had not heard of, or at least not heeded; but here is another difficulty that lies in the way of bringing them together—the question is whether Peter will come to Cornelius when he is sent for; not as if he thought it below him to come at a beck, or as if he were afraid to preach his doctrine to a polite man as Cornelius was: but it sticks at a point of conscience. Cornelius is a very worthy man, and has many good qualities, but he is a Gentile, he is not circumcised; and, because God in his law had forbidden his people to associate with idolatrous nations, they would not keep company with any but those of their own religion, though they were ever so deserving, and they carried the matter so far that they made even the involuntary touch of a Gentile to contract a ceremonial pollution, John xviii. 28. Peter had not got over this stingy bigoted notion of his countrymen, and therefore will be shy of coming to Cornelius. Now, to remove this difficulty, he has a vision here, to prepare him to receive the message sent him by Cornelius, as Ananias had to prepare him to go to Paul. The scriptures or the Old Testament had spoken plainly of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the church



Christ had given plain intimations of it when he ordered them to *teach all nations*; and yet even Peter himself, who knew so much of his Master's mind, could not understand it, till it was here revealed by vision, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, Eph. iii. 6. Now here observe,

I. The circumstances of this vision.

1. It was when the messengers sent from Cornelius were now *nigh the city*, v. 9. Peter knew nothing of their approach, and they knew nothing of his praying; but he that knew both him and them was preparing things for the interview, and facilitating the end of their negociation. To all God's purposes *there is a time*, a proper time; and he is pleased often to bring things to the minds of his ministers, which they had not thought of, just then when they have occasion to use them.

2. It was when *Peter went up upon the house-top to pray*, about noon. (1.) Peter was much in prayer, much in secret prayer, though he had a great deal of public work upon his hands. (2.) He prayed *about the sixth hour*, according to David's example, who, not only *morning and evening*, but *at noon*, addressed himself to God by prayer, Ps. lv. 17. From morning to night we should think to be too long to be without meat; yet who thinks it is too long to be without prayer? (3.) He prayed *upon the house-top*; thither he retired for privacy, where he could neither hear nor be heard, and so might avoid both distraction and ostentation. There, upon the roof of the house, he had a full view of the heavens, which might assist his pious adoration of the God he prayed to; and there he had also a full view of the city and country, which might assist his pious compassion of the people he prayed for. (4.) He had this vision immediately after he had prayed, as an answer to his prayer for the spreading of the gospel, and because the ascent of the heart to God in prayer is an excellent preparative to receive the discoveries of the divine grace and favour.

3. It was when he became *very hungry*, and was waiting for his dinner (v. 10); probably he had not that day eaten before, though doubtless he had prayed before; and now *he would have eaten*, ἡθέλει γεύσασθαι—he *would have tasted*, which intimates his great moderation and temperance in eating. When he was very hungry, yet he would be content with a little, with a taste, and would not *fly upon the spoil*. Now this hunger was a proper inlet to the vision about meats, as Christ's hunger in the wilderness was to Satan's temptation to turn stones into bread.

II. The vision itself, which was not so plain as that to Cornelius, but more figurative and enigmatical, to make the deeper impression. 1. He *fell into a trance or ecstasy*, not of terror, but of contemplation, with which he was so entirely swallowed up as not only not to be regardful, but not to be

sensible, of external things. He quite lost himself to this world, and so had his mind entirely free for converse with divine things; as Adam in innocence, when the deep sleep fell upon him. The more clear we get of the world, the more near we get to heaven: whether Peter was now in *the body or out of the body* he could not himself tell, much less can we, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3. See Gen. xv. 12; Acts xxii. 17. 2. He *saw heaven opened*, that he might be sure that his authority to go to Cornelius was indeed from heaven—that it was a divine light which altered his sentiments, and a divine power which gave him his commission. The opening of the heavens signified the opening of a mystery that had been hid, Rom. xvi. 25. 3. He saw *a great sheet full of all manner of living creatures, which descended from heaven, and was let down to him to the earth*, that is, to the roof of the house where he now was. Here were not only beasts of the earth, but fowls of the air, which might have flown away, laid at his feet; and not only tame beasts, but wild. Here were no fishes of the sea, because there were none of them in particular unclean, but whatever had fins and scales was allowed to be eaten. Some make this sheet, thus filled, to represent the church of Christ. It comes down from heaven, from heaven opened, not only to send it down (Rev. xxi. 2), but to receive souls sent up from it. It is knit at the four corners, to receive those from all parts of the world that are willing to be added to it; and to retain and keep those safe that are taken into it, that they may not fall out; and in this we find some of all countries, nations, and languages, without any distinction of Greek or Jew, or any disadvantage put upon Barbarian or Scythian, Col. iii. 11. The net of the gospel encloses all, both bad and good, those that before were clean and unclean. Or it may be applied to the bounty of the divine Providence, which, antecedently to the prohibitions of the ceremonial law, had given to man a liberty to use all the creatures, to which by the cancelling of that law we are now restored. By this vision we are taught to see all the benefit and service we have from the inferior creatures coming down to us from heaven; it is the gift of God who made them, made them fit for us, and then gave to man a right to them, and dominion over them. Lord, what is man that he should be thus magnified! Ps. viii. 4–8. How should it double our comfort in the creatures, and our obligations to serve God in the use of them, to see them thus let down to us out of heaven! 4. He was ordered by a voice from heaven to make use of this plenty and variety which God had sent him (v. 13) “*Rise, Peter, kill and eat*: without putting any difference between clean and unclean, take which thou hast most mind to.” The distinction of meats which the law made was intended to put a difference between Jew and



Gentile, that it might be difficult to them to dine and sup with a Gentile, because they would have that set before them which they were not allowed to eat; and now the taking off of that prohibition was a plain allowance to converse with the Gentiles, and to be free and familiar with them. Now they might fare as they fared, and therefore might eat with them, and be fellow-commoners with them. 5. He stuck to his principles, and would by no means hearken to the motion, though he was hungry (v. 14): *Not so, Lord.* Though hunger will break through stone walls, God's laws should be to us a stronger fence than stone walls, and not so easily broken through. And he will adhere to God's laws, though he has a countermand by a voice from heaven, not knowing at first but that *Kill, and eat*, was a command of trial whether he would adhere to the more sure word, the written law; and if so his answer had been very good, *Not so, Lord.* Temptations to eat forbidden fruit must not be parleyed with, but peremptorily rejected; we must startle at the thought of it: *Not so, Lord.* The reason he gives is, "*For I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean* ; hitherto I have kept my integrity in this matter, and will still keep it." If God, by his grace, has preserved us from gross sin unto this day, we should use this as an argument with ourselves to abstain from all appearance of evil. So strict were the pious Jews in this matter, that the seven brethren, those glorious martyrs under Antiochus, choose rather to be tortured to death in the most cruel manner that ever was than to eat swine's flesh, because it was forbidden by the law. No wonder then that Peter says it with so much pleasure, that his conscience could witness for him that he had never gratified his appetite with any forbidden food. 6. God, by a second voice from heaven, proclaimed the repeal of the law in this case (v. 15): *What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common.* He that made the law might alter it when he pleased, and reduce the matter to its first state. God had, for reasons suited to the Old-Testament dispensation, restrained the Jews from eating such and such meats, to which, while that dispensation lasted, they were obliged in conscience to submit; but he has now, for reasons suited to the New-Testament dispensation, taken off that restraint, and set the matter at large—has cleansed that which was before polluted to us, and we ought to make use of, and stand fast in, the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and not call that common or unclean which God has now declared clean. Note, We ought to welcome it as a great mercy that by the gospel of Christ we are freed from the distinction of meats, which was made by the law of Moses, and that now every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused; not so much because hereby we gain the use of swine's flesh, hares, rabbits, and other plea-

sant and wholesome food for our bodies, but chiefly because conscience is hereby freed from a yoke in things of this nature, that we might serve God without fear. Though the gospel has made duties which were not so by the law of nature, yet it has not, like the law of Moses, made sins that were not so. Those who command to abstain from some kinds of meat at some times of the year, and place religion in it, call that common which God hath cleansed, and in that error, more than in any truth, are the successors of Peter. 7. *This was done thrice*, v. 16. The sheet was drawn up a little way, and let down again the second time, and so the third time, with the same call to him, to kill, and eat, and the same reason, that what God hath cleansed we must not call common; but whether Peter's refusal was repeated the second and third time is not certain; surely it was not, when his objection had the first time received such a satisfactory answer. The trebling of Peter's vision, like the doubling of Pharaoh's dream, was to show that the thing was certain, and engage him to take so much the more notice of it. The instructions given us in the things of God, whether by the ear in the preaching of the word, or by the eye in sacraments, need to be often repeated; *precept must be upon precept, and line upon line.* But at last the vessel was received up into heaven. Those who make this vessel to represent the church, including both Jews and Gentiles, as this did both clean and unclean creatures, make this very aptly to signify the admission of the believing Gentiles into the church, and into heaven too, into the Jerusalem above. Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and there we shall find, besides those that are sealed out of all the tribes of Israel, an innumerable company out of every nation (Rev. vii. 9); but they are such as God has cleansed.

III. The providence which very opportunely explained this vision, and gave Peter to understand the intention of it, v. 17, 18. 1. What Christ did, Peter knew not just then (John xiii. 7): *He doubted within himself what this vision which he had seen should mean.* He had no reason to doubt the truth of it, that it was a heavenly vision; all his doubt was concerning the meaning of it. Note, Christ reveals himself to his people by degrees, and not all at once; and leaves them to doubt awhile, to ruminate upon a thing, and debate it to and fro in their own minds, before he clears it up to them. 2. Yet he was made to know presently, for the men who were sent from Cornelius were just now come to the house, and were at the gate enquiring whether Peter lodged there; and by their errand it will appear what was the meaning of this vision. Note, God knows what services are before us, and therefore how to prepare us; and we then better know the meaning of what he has taught us when we find what occasion we have to make use of it.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. 21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And the morrow after they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. 26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. 27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? 30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

We have here the meeting between Peter the apostle, and Cornelius the centurion. Though Paul was designed to be the apostle of the Gentiles, and to gather in the harvest among them, and Peter to be the apostle of the circumcision, yet it is ordered that Peter shall break the ice, and reap the first-fruits of the Gentiles, that the believing Jews, who retained too much of the old leaven of ill-will to the Gentiles, might be the better reconciled to their admission into the church, when they were first brought in by their own apostle, which Peter urges against those that would have imposed circumcision upon the Gentile converts (*ch. xv. 7*), *You know that God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel*. Now here,

I. Peter is directed by the Spirit to go along with Cornelius's messengers (*v. 19, 20*), and this is the exposition of the vision; now the riddle is unriddled: *While Peter thought on the vision*; he was musing upon it, and then it was opened to him. Note, Those that would be taught the things of God must think on those things; those that would understand the scriptures must meditate in them day and night. He was at a loss about it, and then had it explained, which encourages us, when we know not what to do, to have our eyes up unto God for direction. Observe, 1. Whence he had the direction. The Spirit said to him what he should do. It was not spoken to him by an angel, but spoken in him by the Spirit, secretly whispering it in his ear as it were, as God spoke to Samuel (*1 Sam. ix. 15*), or impressing it powerfully upon his mind, so that he knew it to be a divine afflatus or inspiration, according to the promise, *John xvi. 13*. 2. What the direction was. (1.) He is told, before any of the servants could come up to tell him, that three men below want to speak with him (*v. 19*), and he must arise from his musings, leave off thinking of the vision, and go down to them, *v. 20*. Those that are searching into the meaning of the words of God, and the visions of the Almighty, should not be always poring, no, nor always praying, but should sometimes look abroad, look about them, and they may meet with that which will be of use to them in their enquiries; for the scripture is in the fulfilling every day. (2.) He is ordered to go along with the messengers to Cornelius, though he was a Gentile, *doubting nothing*. He must not only go, but go cheerfully, without reluctance or hesitation, or any scruple concerning the lawfulness of it; not doubting whether he might go, no, nor whether he ought to go; for it was his duty.



"Go with them, for I have sent them: and I will bear thee out in going along with them, however thou mayest be censured for it." Note, When we see our call clear to any service, we should not suffer ourselves to be perplexed with doubts and scruples concerning it arising from former prejudices or prepossessions, or a fear of men's censure. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and prove his own work.*

II. He receives both them and their message: *He went down to them, v. 21.* So far was he from going out of the way, or refusing to be spoken with, as one that was shy of them, or making them tarry, as one that took state upon him, that he went to them himself, told them he was the person they were enquiring for. And, 1. He favourably receives their message; with abundance of openness and condescension he asks what their business is, what they have to say to him: *What is the cause wherefore you are come?* and they tell him their errand (v. 22): "*Cornelius, an officer of the Roman army, a very honest gentleman, and one who has more religion than most of his neighbours, who fears God above many (Neh. vii. 2), who, though he is not a Jew himself, has carried it so well that he is of good report among all the people of the Jews—they will all give him a good word, for a conscientious, sober, charitable man, so that it will be no discredit to thee to be seen in his company—he was warned from God,*" ἐχρηματισθη—"he had an oracle from God, sent to him by an angel" (and the lively oracles of the law of Moses were given by the disposition of angels), "by which he was ordered to send for thee to his house (where he is expecting thee, and ready to bid thee welcome), and to hear words of thee: they know not what words, but they are such as he may hear from thee, and not from any one else so well." *Faith comes by hearing.* When Peter repeats this, he tells us more fully, they are words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved, ch. xi. 14. "Come to him, for an angel bade him send for thee: come to him, for he is ready to hear and receive the saving words thou hast to bring to him." 2. He kindly entertained the messengers (v. 23): *He called them in, and lodged them.* He did not bid them go and refresh and repose themselves in an inn at their own charge, but was himself at the charge of entertaining them in his own quarters. What was getting ready for him (v. 10) they should be welcome to share in; he little thought what company he should have when he bespoke his dinner, but God foresaw it. Note, It becomes Christians and ministers to be hospitable, and ready, according as their ability is, and there is occasion for it, to entertain strangers. Peter lodged them, though they were Gentiles, to show how readily he complied with the design of the vision in eating with Gentiles; for he immediately took them to eat with him. Though they were two of them servants, and the

other a common soldier, yet Peter thought it not below him to take them into his house. Probably he did it that he might have some talk with them about Cornelius and his family; for the apostles, though they had instructions from the Spirit, yet made use of other information, as they had occasion for it.

III. He went with them to Cornelius, whom he found ready to receive and entertain him. 1. Peter, when he went with them, was accompanied by certain brethren from Joppa, where he now was, v. 23. Six of them went along with him, as we find, ch. xi. 12. Either Peter desired their company, that they might be witnesses of his proceeding cautiously with reference to the Gentiles, and of the good ground on which he went, and therefore he invited them (ch. xi. 12), or they offered their service to attend him, and desired they might have the honour and happiness of being his fellow-travellers. This was one way in which the primitive Christians very much showed their respect to their ministers: they accompanied them in their journeys, to keep them in countenance, to be their guard, and, as there was occasion, to minister to them; with a further prospect not only of doing them service, but of being edified by their converse. It is a pity that those who have skill and will to do good to others by their discourse should want an opportunity for it by travelling alone. 2. Cornelius, when he was ready to receive him, had got some friends together of Cesarea. It seems, it was above a day's journey, nearly two from Joppa to Cesarea; for it was the day after they set out that they entered into Cesarea (v. 24), and the afternoon of that day, v. 30. It is probable that they travelled on foot; the apostles generally did so. Now when they came into the house of Cornelius Peter found, (1.) That he was expected, and this was an encouragement to him. *Cornelius waited for them, and such a guest was worth waiting for; nor can I blame him if he waited with some impatience, longing to know what that mighty thing was which an angel bade him expect to hear from Peter.* (2.) That he was expected by many, and this was a further encouragement to him. As Peter brought some with him to partake of the spiritual gift he had now to dispense, so *Cornelius had called together, not only his own family, but kinsmen and near friends, to partake with him of the heavenly instructions he expected from Peter, which would give Peter a larger opportunity of doing good.* Note, We should not covet to eat our spiritual morsels alone, Job xxxi. 17. It ought to be both given and taken as a piece of kindness and respect to our kindred and friends to invite them to join with us in religious exercises, to go with us to hear a sermon. What Cornelius ought to do he thought his kinsmen and friends ought to do too; and therefore let them come and hear it at the first hand, that it may be no surprise to them to see him change upon it.



IV. Here is the first interview between Peter and Cornelius, in which we have, 1. The profound and indeed undue respect and honour which Cornelius paid to Peter (v. 25): *He met him as he was coming in*, and instead of taking him in his arms, and embracing him as a friend, which would have been very acceptable to Peter, *he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him*; some think, as a prince and a great man, according to the usage of the eastern countries; others think, as an incarnate deity, or as if he took him to be the Messiah himself. His worshipping a man was indeed culpable; but, considering his present ignorance, it was excusable, nay, and it was an evidence of something in him that was very commendable—and that was a great veneration for divine and heavenly things: no wonder if, till he was better informed, he took him to be the Messiah, and therefore worshipped him, whom he was ordered to send for by an angel from heaven. But the worshipping of his pretended successor, who is not only a man, but a sinful man, the man of sin himself, is altogether inexcusable, and such an absurdity as would be incredible if we were not told before that all the world would worship the beast, Rev. xiii. 4. 2. Peter's modest and indeed just and pious refusal of this honour that was done him (v. 26): *He took him up into his arms, with his own hands* (though time was when he little thought he should ever either receive so much respect from or show so much affection to an uncircumcised Gentile), *saying, "Stand up, I myself also am a man,* and therefore not to be worshipped thus." The good angels of the churches, like the good angels of heaven, cannot bear to have the least of that honour shown to them which is due to God only. *See thou do it not*, saith the angel to John (Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 9), and in like manner the apostle to Cornelius. How careful was Paul *that no man should think of him above what he saw in him!* 2 Cor. xii. 6. Christ's faithful servants could better bear to be vilified than to be deified. Peter did not entertain a surmise that his great respect for him, though excessive, might contribute to the success of his preaching, and therefore if he will be deceived let him be deceived; no, let him know that Peter is a man, that *the treasure is in earthen vessels*, that he may value the treasure for its own sake.

V. The account which Peter and Cornelius give to each other, and to the company, of the hand of Heaven in bringing them together: *As he talked with him—συνμιλών αὐτῷ, he went in*, v. 27. Peter went in, talking familiarly with Cornelius, endeavouring, by the freedom of his converse with him, to take off something of that dread which he seemed to have of him; and, when he came in, *he found many that were come together*, more than he expected, which added solemnity, as well as opportunity of doing good, to this service. Now,

1. Peter declares the direction God gave to him to come to those Gentiles, v. 28, 29. They knew it had never been allowed by the Jews, but always looked upon as an *unlawful thing*, ἀθέμιον—an abomination, for a man that is a Jew, a native Jew as I am, to keep company or come unto one of another nation, a stranger, an uncircumcised Gentile. It was not made so by the law of God, but by the decree of their wise men, which they looked upon to be no less binding. They did not forbid them to converse or traffic with Gentiles in the street or shop, or upon the exchange, but to eat with them. Even in Joseph's time, the Egyptians and Hebrews could not eat together, Gen. xliii. 32. The three children would not defile themselves with the king's meat, Dan. i. 8. They might not come into the house of a Gentile, for they looked upon it to be ceremonially polluted. Thus scornfully did the Jews look upon the Gentiles, who were not behindhand with them in contempt, as appears by many passages in the Latin poets. "*But now*," saith Peter, "*God hath shown me*, by a vision, *that I should not call any man common or unclean*, nor refuse to converse with any man for the sake of his country." Peter, who had taught his new converts to *save themselves from the untoward generation of wicked men* (ch ii. 40), is now himself taught to join himself with the towardly generation of devout Gentiles. Ceremonial characters were abolished, that more regard might be had to moral ones. Peter thought it necessary to let them know how he came to change his mind in this matter, and that it was by a divine revelation, lest he should be upbraided with it as having used lightness. God having thus taken down the partition-wall, (1.) He assures them of his readiness to do them all the good offices he could; that, when he kept at a distance, it was not out of any personal disgust to them, but only because he wanted leave from heaven, and, having now received permission, he was at their service: "*Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for*, ready to preach the same gospel to you that I have preached to the Jews." The disciples of Christ could not but have some notion of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, but they imagined it must be only to those Gentiles that were first proselyted to the Jewish religion, which mistake Peter acknowledges was not rectified. (2.) He enquires wherein he might be serviceable to them: "*I ask, therefore, for what intent you have sent for me?*" What do you expect from me, or what business have you with me?" Note, Those that desire the help of God's ministers ought to look well to it that they propose right ends to themselves in it, and do it with a good intention.

2. Cornelius declares the directions God gave to him to send for Peter, and that it was purely in obedience to those directions



that he had sent for him. Then we are right in our aims, in sending for and attending on a gospel-ministry, when we do it with a regard to the divine appointment instituting that ordinance and requiring us to make use of it. Now,

(1.) Cornelius gives an account of the angel's appearing to him, and ordering him to send for Peter; not as glorying in it, but as that which warranted his expectation of a message from heaven by Peter. [1.] He tells how this vision found him employed (v. 30): *Four days ago I was fasting until this hour*, this hour of the day that it is now when Peter came, about the middle of the afternoon. By this it appears that religious fasting, in order to the greater seriousness and solemnity of praying, was used by devout people who were not Jews; *the king of Nineveh proclaimed a fast*, Jonah iii. 5 Some give these words another sense: *From four days ago I have been fasting until this hour*; as if he had eaten no meat, or at least no meal, from that time to this. But it comes in as an introduction to the story of the vision; and therefore the former must be the meaning. *He was at the ninth hour praying in his house*, not in the synagogue, but at home. *I will that men pray* wherever they dwell. His praying in his house intimates that it was not a secret prayer in his closet, but in a more public room of his house, with his family about him; and perhaps after prayer he retired, and had this vision. Observe, *At the ninth hour of the day*, three of the clock in the afternoon, most people were travelling or trading, working in the fields, visiting their friends, taking their pleasure, or taking a nap after dinner; yet then Cornelius was at his devotions, which shows how much he made religion his business; and then it was that he had this message from heaven. Those that would hear comfortably from God must be much in speaking to him. [2.] He describes the messenger that brought him this message from heaven: *There stood a man before me in bright clothing*, as Christ's was when he was transfigured, and that of the two angels who appeared at Christ's resurrection (Luke xxiv. 4), and at his ascension (ch. i. 10), showing their relation to the world of light. [3.] He repeats the message that was sent to him (v. 31, 32), just as we had it, v. 4—6. Only here it is said, *Thy prayer is heard*. We are not told what his prayer was; but if this message was an answer to it, and it should seem it was, we may suppose that finding the deficiency of natural light, and that it left him at a loss how to obtain the pardon of his sin and the favour of God, he prayed that God would make some further discoveries of himself and of the way of salvation to him. "Well," saith the angel, *send for Peter*, and he shall give thee such a discovery."

(2.) He declares his own and his friends' readiness to receive the message Peter had to

deliver (v. 33): *Immediately therefore I sent to thee*, as I was directed, *and thou hast well done that thou hast come to us*, though we are Gentiles. Note, Faithful ministers do well to come to people that are willing and desirous to receive instruction from them; to come when they are sent for; it is as good a deed as they can do. Well, Peter is come to do his part; but will they do theirs? Yes. "Thou art here prepared to speak, and we are here prepared to hear," 1 Sam. iii. 9, 10. Observe, [1.] Their religious attendance upon the word: "*We are all here present before God*; we are here in a religious manner, are here as worshippers" (they thus compose themselves into a serious solemn frame of spirit): "*therefore*, because thou art come to us by such a warrant, on such an errand, because we have such a price in our hand as we never had before and perhaps may never have again, we are ready now at this time of worship, here in this place of worship" (though it was in a private house): "*we are present*, *παριστευμεν*—*we are at the business*, and are ready to come at a call." If we would have God's special presence at an ordinance, we must be there with a special presence, an ordinance presence: *Here I am*. "*We are all present*, all that were invited; we, and all that belong to us; we, and all that is within us." The whole of the man must be present; not the body here, and the heart, with the fool's eyes, in the ends of the earth. But that which makes it indeed a religious attendance is, *We are present before God*. In holy ordinances we present ourselves unto the Lord, and we must be as before him, as those that see his eye upon us. [2.] The intention of this attendance: "*We are present to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*, and given thee in charge to be delivered to us." Observe, *First*, Peter was there to preach all things that were commanded him of God; for, as he had an ample commission to preach the gospel, so he had full instructions what to preach. *Secondly*, They were ready to hear, not whatever he pleased to say, but what he was commanded of God to say. The truths of Christ were not communicated to the apostles to be published or stifled as they thought fit, but entrusted with them to be published to the world. "*We are ready to hear all*, to come at the beginning of the service and stay to the end, and be attentive all the while, else how can we hear all? We are desirous to hear all that thou art commissioned to preach, though it be ever so displeasing to flesh and blood, and ever so contrary to our former notions or present secular interests. We are ready to hear all, and therefore let nothing be kept back that is profitable for us."

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35

But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. 36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all): 37 That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judæa, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40 Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even to us*, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

We have here Peter's sermon preached to Cornelius and his friends: that is, an abstract or summary of it; for we have reason to think that he did with many other words testify and exhort to this purport. It is intimated that he expressed himself with a great deal of solemnity and gravity, but with freedom and copiousness, in that phrase, *he opened his mouth, and spoke*, v. 34. *O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open to you*, saith Paul, 2 Cor. vi. 11. "You shall find us communicative, if we but find you inquisitive." Hitherto the mouths of the apostles had been shut to the uncircumcised Gentiles, they had nothing to say to them; but now God gave unto them, as he did to Ezekiel, *the opening of the mouth*. This excellent sermon of Peter's is admirably suited to the circumstances of those to whom he preached it; for it was a new sermon.

I. Because they were Gentiles to whom he preached. He shows that, notwithstanding this, they were interested in the gospel of Christ, which he had to preach, and entitled to the benefit of it, upon an equal footing with the Jews. It was necessary that this should be cleared, or else with what

comfort could either he preach or they hear? He therefore lays down this as an undoubted principle, *that God is no respecter of persons: doth not know favour in judgment*, as the Hebrew phrase is; which magistrates are forbidden to do (Deut. i. 17; xvi. 19; Prov. xxiv. 23), and are blamed for doing, Ps. lxxxii. 2. And it is often said of God that he doth not respect persons, Deut. x. 17; 2 Chron. xix. 7; Job xxxiv. 19; Rom. ii. 11; Col. iii. 25; 1 Pet. i. 17. He doth not give judgment in favour of a man for the sake of any external advantage foreign to the merits of the cause. God never perverts judgment upon personal regards and considerations, nor countenances a wicked man in a wicked thing for the sake of his beauty, or stature, his country, parentage, relations, wealth, or honour in the world. God, as a benefactor, gives favours arbitrarily and by sovereignty (Deut. vii. 7, 8; ix. 5, 6; Matt. xx. 10); but he does not, as a judge, so give sentence; *but in every nation*, and under every denomination, *he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him*, v. 35. The case is plainly thus:—

1. God never did, nor ever will, justify and save a wicked Jew that lived and died impenitent, though he was *of the seed of Abraham*, and a *Hebrew of the Hebrews*, and had all the honour and advantages that attended circumcision. He does and will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; and of the Jew first, whose privileges and professions, instead of screening him from the judgment of God, will but aggravate his guilt and condemnation. See Rom. ii. 3, 8, 9, 17. Though God has favoured the Jews, above other nations, with the dignities of visible church-membership, yet he will not therefore accept of any particular persons of that dignity, if they allow themselves in immoralities contradictory to their profession; and particularly in persecution, which was now, more than any other, the national sin of the Jews.

2. He never did, nor ever will, reject or refuse an honest Gentile, who, though he has not the privileges and advantages that the Jews have, yet, like Cornelius, fears God, and worships him, and works righteousness, that is, is just and charitable towards all men, who lives up to the light he has, both in a sincere devotion and in a regular conversation. Whatever nation he is of, though ever so far remote from kindred to the seed of Abraham, though ever so despicable, nay, though in ever so ill a name, that shall be no prejudice to him. God judges of men by their hearts, not by their country or parentage; and, wherever he finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God, Ps. xviii. 25. Observe, *Fearing God, and working righteousness*, must go together; for, as righteousness towards men is a branch of



true religion, so religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness. Godliness and honesty must go together, and neither will excuse for the want of the other. But, where these are predominant, no doubt is to be made of acceptance with God. Not that any man, since the fall, can obtain the favour of God otherwise than through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and by the grace of God in him; but those that have not the knowledge of him, and therefore cannot have an explicit regard to him, may yet receive grace from God for his sake, *to fear God and to work righteousness*; and wherever God gives grace to do so, as he did to Cornelius, he will, through Christ, accept the work of his own hands. Now, (1.) This was always a truth, before Peter perceived it, *that God respecteth no man's person*; it was the fixed rule of judgment from the beginning: *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And, if not well, sin, and the punishment of it, lie at the door*, Gen. iv. 7. God will not ask in the great day what country men were of, but what they were, what they did, and how they stood affected towards him and towards their neighbours; and, if men's personal characters received neither advantage nor disadvantage from the great difference that existed between Jews and Gentiles, much less from any less difference of sentiments and practices that may happen to be among Christians themselves, as those *about meats and days*, Rom. xiv. It is certain *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; and he that in these things serveth Christ is accepted of God, and ought to be approved of men; for dare we reject those whom God doth not? (2.) Yet now it was made more clear than it had been; this great truth had been darkened by the covenant of peculiarity made with Israel, and the badges of distinction put upon them; the ceremonial law was a wall of partition between them and other nations; it is true that in it *God favoured that nation* (Rom. iii. 1, 2; ix. 4), and thence particular persons among them were ready to infer that they were sure of God's acceptance, though they lived as they listed, and that no Gentile could possibly be accepted of God. God had said a great deal by the prophets to prevent and rectify this mistake, but now at length he doth it effectually, by abolishing the covenant of peculiarity, repealing the ceremonial law, and so setting the matter at large, and placing both Jew and Gentile upon the same level before God; and Peter is here made to perceive it, by comparing the vision which he had with that which Cornelius had. Now in Christ Jesus, it is plain, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision*, Gal. v. 6; Col. iii. 11.

II. Because they were Gentiles inhabiting a place within the confines of the land of Israel, he refers them to what they them-

selves could not but know concerning the life and doctrine, the preaching and miracles, the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus. for these were things the report of which spread into every corner of the nation, v. 37, &c. It facilitates the work of ministers, when they deal with such as have some knowledge of the things of God, to which they may appeal, and on which they may build.

1. They knew in general, *the word*, that is, the gospel, *which God sent to the children of Israel: That word, I say, you know*, v. 37. Though the Gentiles were not admitted to hear it (Christ and his disciples were *not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*), yet they could not but hear of it: it was all the talk both of city and country. We are often told in the gospels how the fame of Christ went into all parts of Canaan, when he was on earth, as afterwards the fame of his gospel went into all parts of the world, Rom. x. 18. That word, that divine word, that word of power and grace, *you know*. (1.) What the purport of this word was. God by it *published the glad tidings of peace by Jesus Christ*, so it should be read—*εὐαγγελιζόμενος εἰρήνην*. It is God himself that proclaims peace, who justly might have proclaimed war. He lets the world of mankind know that he is willing to be at peace with them through Jesus Christ; in him he was *reconciling the world to himself*. (2.) To whom it was sent—to the children of Israel, in the first place. The prime offer is made to them; this all their neighbours heard of, and were ready to envy them those advantages of the gospel, more than they ever envied them those of their law. *Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them*, Ps. cxxvi. 2.

2. They knew the several matters of fact relating to this word of the gospel sent to Israel. (1.) They knew the baptism of repentance which John preached by way of introduction to it, and in which the gospel first began, Mark i. 1. They knew what an extraordinary man John was, and what a direct tendency his preaching had to *prepare the way of the Lord*. They knew what great flocking there was to his baptism, what an interest he had, and what he did. (2.) They knew that immediately after John's baptism the gospel of Christ, that word of peace, was *published throughout all Judea*, and that it took its rise from Galilee. The twelve apostles, and seventy disciples, and our Master himself, published these glad tidings in all parts of the land; so that we may suppose there was not a town or village in all the land of Canaan but had had the gospel preached in it. (3.) They knew that Jesus of Nazareth, when he was here upon earth, *went about doing good*. They knew what a benefactor he was to that nation, both to the souls and the bodies of men; how he made it his business to do good to all, and never did hurt to any. He was not idle, but still doing; not



selfish, but doing good; did not confine himself to one place, nor wait till people came to him to seek his help, but went to them, went about from place to place, and wherever he came he was doing good. Hereby he showed *that he was sent of God, who is good and does good*; and does good because he is good: and who hereby *left not himself without witness* to the world, *in that he did good*, ch. xiv.

17. And in this he hath set us an example of indefatigable industry in serving God and our generation; for we came into the world that we might do all the good we can in it; and therein, like Christ, we must always abide and abound. (4.) They knew more particularly that he *healed all that were oppressed of the devil*, and helped them from under his oppressing power. By this it appeared not only that he was sent of God, as it was a kindness to men, but that he was sent to *destroy the works of the devil*; for thus he obtained many a victory over him. (5.) They knew that the Jews put him to death; they *slew him by hanging him on a tree*. When Peter preached to the Jews, he said *whom you slew*; but now that he preached to the Gentiles it is whom *they* slew; they, to whom he had done and designed so much good. All this they knew; but lest they should think it was only a report, and was magnified, as reports usually are, more than the truth, Peter, for himself and the rest of the apostles, attested it (v. 39): *We are witnesses*, eye-witnesses, of *all things which he did*; and ear-witnesses of the doctrine which he preached, *both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem*, in city and country.

3. They did know, or might know, by all this, that he had a commission from heaven to preach and act as he did. This he still harps upon in his discourse, and takes all occasions to hint it to them. Let them know, (1.) That this Jesus is *Lord of all*; it comes in a parenthesis, but is the principal proposition intended to be proved, that Jesus Christ, by whom peace is made between God and man, is *Lord of all*; not only as God over all *blessed for evermore*, but as Mediator, *all power both in heaven and on earth* is put into his hand, and all judgment committed to him. He is Lord of angels; they are all his humble servants. He is Lord of the powers of darkness, for he hath triumphed over them. He is king of nations, has a power over all flesh. He is king of saints, all the children of God are his scholars, his subjects, his soldiers. (2.) That God *anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power*; he was both authorized and enabled to do what he did by a divine anointing, whence he was called *Christ—the Messiah, the anointed One*. The Holy Ghost descended upon him at his baptism, and he was full of power both in preaching and working miracles, which was the seal of a divine mission. (3.) That God *was with him*, v. 38. His works were wrought in God.

God not only sent him, but was present with him all along, owned him, stood by him, and carried him on in all his services and sufferings. Note, Those whom God anoints he will accompany; he will himself be with those to whom he has given his Spirit.

III. Because they had had no more certain information concerning this Jesus, Peter declares to them his resurrection from the dead, and the proofs of it, that they might not think that when he was slain there was an end of him. Probably, they had heard at Cesarea some talk of his having risen from the dead; but the talk of it was soon silenced by that vile suggestion of the Jews, that *his disciples came by night and stole him away*. And therefore Peter insists upon this as the main support of that word which preacheth peace by Jesus Christ. 1. The power by which he arose is incontestably divine (v. 40). *Him God raised up the third day*, which not only disproved all the calumnies and accusations he was laid under by men, but effectually proved God's acceptance of the satisfaction he made for the sin of man by the blood of his cross. He did not break prison, but had a legal discharge. *God raised him up*. 2. The proofs of his resurrection were incontestably clear; for God *showed him openly*. *He gave him to be made manifest*—*ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν ἔμφανη γενέσθαι*, to be visible, evidently so; so he appears, as that it appears beyond contradiction to be him, and not another. It was such a showing of him as amounted to a demonstration of the truth of his resurrection. He showed him not publicly indeed (it was not open in this sense), but evidently; *not to all the people*, who had been the witnesses of his death. By resisting all the evidences he had given them of his divine mission in his miracles, they had forfeited the favour of being eye-witnesses of this great proof of it. Those who immediately forged and promoted that lie of his being stolen away were justly given up to strong delusions to believe it, and not suffered to be undeceived by his being shown to all the people; and so much the greater shall be the blessedness of those *who have not seen, and yet have believed*—*Nec ille se in vulgus edixit, ne impii errore, liberarentur; ut et fides non premio mediocri destinato difficultate constaret*—*He showed not himself to the people at large, lest the impious among them should have been forthwith loosed from their error, and that faith, the reward of which is so ample, might be exercised with a degree of difficulty*.—Tertul. Apol. cap. 11. But, though all the people did not see him, a sufficient number saw him to attest the truth of his resurrection. The testator's declaring his last will and testament needs not to be before all the people; it is enough that it be done before a competent number of credible witnesses; so the resurrection of Christ was proved before sufficient witnesses. (1.) They were not so by chance, but they



were chosen before of God to be witnesses of it, and, in order to this, had their education under the Lord Jesus, and intimate converse with him, that, having known him so intimately before, they might the better be assured it was he (2.) They had not a sudden and transient view of him, but a great deal of free conversation with him: *They did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.* This implies that they saw him eat and drink, witness their dining with him at the sea of Tiberias, and the two disciples supping with him at Emmaus; and this proved that he had a true and real body. But this was not all; they saw him without any terror or consternation, which might have rendered them incompetent witnesses, for they saw him so frequently, and he conversed with them so familiarly, that *they did eat and drink with him.* It is brought as a proof of the clear view which the nobles of Israel had of the glory of God (Exod. xxiv. 11), that *they saw God, and did eat and drink.*

IV. He concludes with an inference from all this, that therefore that which they all ought to do was to believe in this Jesus: he was sent to tell Cornelius what he must do, and it is this; his praying and his giving alms were very well, but one thing he lacked, he must believe in Christ. Observe,

1. Why he must believe in him. Faith has reference to a testimony, and the Christian faith is *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, it is built upon the testimony given by them. (1.) By the apostles. Peter as foreman speaks for the rest, that *God commanded them*, and gave them in charge, *to preach to the people, and to testify concerning Christ*; so that their testimony was not only credible, but authentic, and what we may venture upon. Their testimony is God's testimony; and they are his witnesses to the world. They do not only say it as matter of news, but testify it as matter of record, by which men must be judged. (2.) By the prophets of the Old Testament, whose testimony beforehand, not only concerning his sufferings, but concerning the design and intention of them, very much corroborates the apostles' testimony concerning them (v. 43): *To him give all the prophets witness.* We have reason to think that Cornelius and his friends were no strangers to the writings of the prophets. Out of the mouth of these two clouds of witnesses, so exactly agreeing, *this word is established.*

2. What they must believe concerning him. (1.) That we are all accountable to Christ as our Judge; this the apostles were commanded to testify to the world, that this Jesus is *ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and dead*, v. 42. He is empowered to prescribe the terms of salvation, that rule by which we must be judged, to give laws both to *quick and dead*, both to Jew and Gentile; and he is appointed to determine the everlasting condition of all the children

of men at the great day, of those that shall be found alive and of those that shall be raised from the dead. He hath assured us of this, *in that he hath raised him from the dead* (ch. xvii. 31), so that it is the great concern of every one of us, in the belief of this, to seek his favour, and to make him our friend. (2.) That if we believe in him we shall all be justified by him as our righteousness, v. 43. The prophets, when they spoke of the death of Christ, did witness this, *that through his name*, for his sake, and upon the account of his merit, *whosoever believeth in him*, Jew or Gentile, *shall receive remission of sins.* This is the great thing we need, without which we are undone, and which the convinced conscience is most inquisitive after, which the carnal Jews promised themselves from their ceremonial sacrifices and purifications, yea, and the heathen too from their atonements, but all in vain; it is to be had only through the name of Christ, and only by those that believe in his name; and those that do so may be assured of it; their sins shall be pardoned, and there shall be no condemnation to them. And the remission of sins lays a foundation for all other favours and blessings, by taking that out of the way which hinders them. If sin be pardoned, all is well, and shall end everlastingly well.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

We have here the issue and effect of Peter's sermon to Cornelius and his friends. He did not labour in vain among them, but they were all brought home to Christ. Here we have,

I. God's owning Peter's word, by conferring the Holy Ghost upon the hearers of it, and immediately upon the hearing of it (v. 44): *While Peter was yet speaking these words*, and perhaps designed to say more, he was happily superseded by visible indications that *the Holy Ghost*, even in his miraculous gifts and powers, *fell on all those who heard the word*, even as he did on the apostles at first; so Peter saith, ch. xi. 15. Therefore some think it was with a rushing mighty

wind, and in cloven tongues, as that was. Observe, 1. When the Holy Ghost fell upon them—while Peter was preaching. Thus God bore witness to what he said, and accompanied it with a divine power. Thus were the *signs of an apostle wrought among them*, 2 Cor. xii. 12. Though Peter could not give the Holy Ghost, yet the Holy Ghost being given along with the word of Peter, by this it appeared he was sent of God. The Holy Ghost fell upon others after they were baptized, for their confirmation; but upon these Gentiles before they were baptized: as Abraham was justified by faith, being yet in uncircumcision, to show that God is not tied to a method, nor confines himself to external signs. The Holy Ghost fell upon those that were neither circumcised nor baptized; for *it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing*. 2. How it appeared that the Holy Ghost had fallen upon them (v. 46): *They spoke with tongues* which they never learned, perhaps the Hebrew, the holy tongue; as the preachers were enabled to speak the vulgar tongues, that they might communicate the doctrine of Christ to the hearers, so, probably, the hearers were immediately taught the sacred tongue, that they might examine the proofs which the preachers produced out of the Old Testament in the original. Or their being enabled to speak with tongues intimated that they were all designed for ministers, and by this first descent of the Spirit upon them were qualified to preach the gospel to others, which they did but now receive themselves. But, observe, when they spoke with tongues, they *magnified God*, they spoke of Christ and the benefits of redemption, which Peter had been preaching to the glory of God. Thus did they on whom the Holy Ghost first descended, *ch. ii. 11*. Note, Whatever gift we are endued with, we ought to honour God with it, and particularly the gift of speaking, and all the improvements of it. 3. What impression it made upon the believing Jews that were present (v. 45): *Those of the circumcision who believed were astonished*—those six that came along with Peter; it surprised them exceedingly, and perhaps gave them some uneasiness, because upon the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost, which they thought had been appropriated to their own nation. Had they understood the scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at this, it would not have been such an astonishment to them; but by our mistaken notions of things we create difficulties to ourselves in the methods of divine providence and grace.

II. Peter's owning God's work in baptizing those on whom the Holy Ghost fell. Observe, 1. Though they had received the Holy Ghost, yet it was requisite they should be baptized; though God is not tied to instituted ordinances, we are; and no extraordinary gifts set us above them, but rather oblige us so much the more to conform to them.

Some in our days would have argued "These are baptized with the *Holy Ghost* and therefore what need have they to be baptized with *water*? It is below them." No; it is not below them, while water-baptism is an ordinance of Christ, and the door of admission into the visible church, and a seal of the new covenant. 2. Though they were Gentiles, yet, having received the Holy Ghost, they might be admitted to baptism (v. 47): *Can any man, though ever so rigid a Jew, forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* The argument is conclusive; can we deny the sign to those who have received the thing signified? Are not those on whom God has bestowed the grace of the covenant plainly entitled to the seals of the covenant? Surely those that have *received the Spirit as well as we* ought to receive baptism as well as we; for it becomes us to follow God's indications, and to take those into communion with us whom he hath taken into communion with himself. God hath promised to pour his Spirit upon the seed of the faithful, upon their offspring; and who then can forbid water, that they should not be baptized, who have *received the promise of the Holy Ghost as well as we?* Now it appears why the Spirit was given them before they were baptized—because otherwise Peter could not have persuaded himself to baptize them, any more than to have preached to them, if he had not been ordered to do it by a vision; at least he could not have avoided the censure of *those of the circumcision that believed*. Thus is there one unusual step or divine grace taken after another to bring the Gentiles into the church. How well is it for us that the grace of a good God is so much more extensive than the charity of some good men! 3. Peter did not baptize them himself, but *commanded them to be baptized*, v. 48. It is probable that some of the brethren who came with him did it by his order, and that he declined it for the same reason that Paul did—lest those that were baptized by him should think the better of themselves for it. or he should seem to *have baptized in his own name*, 1 Cor. i. 15. The apostles received the commission to *go and disciple all nations by baptism*. But it was to pray and the ministry of the word that they were to *give* themselves. And Paul says that he was sent, *not to baptize but to preach*, which was the more noble and excellent work. The business of baptizing was therefore ordinarily devolved upon the inferior ministers; these acted by the orders of the apostles, who might therefore be said to do it. *Qui per alterum facit, per seipsum facere dicitur—What a man does by another, he may be said to do by himself*.

III. Their owning both Peter's word and God's work in their desire for further advantage by Peter's ministry: *They prayed him to tarry certain days*. They could not press



him to reside constantly among them—they knew that he had work to do in other places, and that for the present he was expected at Jerusalem; yet they were not willing he should go away immediately, but earnestly begged he would stay for some time among them, that they might be further instructed by him in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Note, 1. Those who have some acquaintance with Christ, cannot but covet more. 2. Even those that have received the Holy Ghost must see their need of the ministry of the word.

## CHAP. XI.

In this chapter we have, 1. Peter's necessary vindication of what he did in receiving Cornelius and his friends into the church, from the censure he lay under for it among the brethren, and their acquiescence in it, ver. 1—18. II. The good success of the gospel at Antioch, and the parts adjacent, ver. 19—21. III. The carrying on of the good work that was begun at Antioch, by the ministry of Barnabas first, and afterwards of Paul in conjunction with him, and the lasting name of Christian first given to the disciples there, ver. 22—26. IV. A prediction of an approaching famine, and the contribution that was made among the Gentile converts for the relief of the poor saints in Judea, upon that occasion, ver. 27—30.

AND the apostles and brethren that were in Judæa heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. 4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying, 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cæsarea unto me. 12 And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing

doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: 13 And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

The preaching of the gospel to Cornelius was a thing which we poor sinners of the Gentiles have reason to reflect upon with a great deal of joy and thankfulness; for it was the bringing of light to us who sat in darkness. Now it being so great a surprize to the believing as well as the unbelieving Jews, it is worth while to enquire how it was received, and what comments were made upon it. And here we find,

I. Intelligence was presently brought of it to the church in Jerusalem, and thereabouts; for Cæsarea was not so far from Jerusalem but that they might presently hear of it. Some for good-will, and some for ill-will, would spread the report of it; so that before he himself had returned to Jerusalem *the apostles and the brethren* there and in *Judæa* heard that the Gentiles also had received *the word of God*, that is, the gospel of Christ, which is not only a word of God, but the word of God; for it is the summary and centre of all divine revelation. They received Christ; *for his name is called the Word of God*, Rev. xix. 13. Not only that the Jews who were dispersed into the Gentile countries, and the Gentiles who were proselyted to the Jewish religion, but that the Gentiles also themselves, with whom it had hitherto been thought unlawful to hold common conversation, were taken into church-communion, that they had *received the word of God*. That is, 1. That the word of God was preached to them, which was a greater honour put upon them than they expected. Yet I wonder this should seem strange to



those who were themselves commissioned to *preach the gospel to every creature*. But thus often are the prejudices of pride and bigotry held fast against the clearest discoveries of divine truth. 2. That it was entertained and submitted to by them, which was a better work wrought upon them than they expected. It is likely they had got a notion that if the gospel were preached to the Gentiles it would be to no purpose, because the proofs of the gospel were fetched so much out of the Old Testament, which the Gentiles did not receive: they looked upon them as not inclined to religion, nor likely to receive the impressions of it; and therefore were surprised to hear that they had received the word of the Lord. Note, We are too apt to despair of doing good to those who yet, when they are tried, prove very tractable.

II. That offence was taken at it by the believing Jews (v. 2, 3): *When Peter had himself come up to Jerusalem, those that were of the circumcision, those Jewish converts that still retained a veneration for circumcision, contended with him*. They charged it upon him as a crime that he *went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them*; and thereby they think he has stained, if not forfeited, the honour of his apostleship, and ought to come under the censure of the church: so far were they from looking upon him as infallible, or as the supreme head of the church that all were accountable to, and he to none. See here, 1. How much it is the bane and damage of the church, to monopolize it, and to exclude those from it, and from the benefit of the means of grace, that are not in every thing as we are. There are narrow souls that are for engrossing the riches of the church, as there are that would engross the riches of the world, and would be *placed alone in the midst of the earth*. These men were of Jonah's mind, who, in a jealousy for his people, was angry that the Ninevites received the word of God, and justified himself in it. 2. Christ's ministers must not think it strange if they be censured and quarrelled with, not only by their professed enemies, but by their professing friends; not only for their follies and infirmities, but for their good actions seasonably and well done; but, if we have proved our own work, we may have rejoicing in ourselves, as Peter had, whatever reflections we may have from our brethren. Those that are zealous and courageous in the service of Christ must expect to be censured by those who, under pretence of being cautious, are cold and indifferent. Those who are of catholic, generous, charitable principles, must expect to be censured by such as are conceited and strait-laced, who say, *Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou*.

III. Peter gave such a full and fair account of the matter of fact as was sufficient, without any further argument or apology, both to justify him, and to satisfy them (v. 4): *He rehearsed the matter from the beginning,*

and laid it before them in order, and then could appeal to themselves whether he had done amiss; for it appeared all along God's own work, and not his.

1. He takes it for granted that if they had rightly understood how the matter was they would not have contended with him, but rather have concurred with him, and commended him. And it is a good reason why we should be moderate in our censures, and sparing of them, because if we rightly understood that which we are so forward to run down perhaps we should see cause to run in with it. When we see others do that which looks suspicious, instead of contending with them, we should enquire of them what ground they went upon; and, if we have not an opportunity to do that, should ourselves put the best construction upon it that it will bear, and *judge nothing before the time*.

2. He is very willing to stand right in their opinion, and takes pains to give them satisfaction. He does not insist upon his being the chief of the apostles, for he was far from the thought of that supremacy which his pretended successors claim. Nor does he think it enough to tell them that he is satisfied himself in the grounds he went upon, and they need not trouble themselves about it; but he is ready to *give a reason of the hope that is in him* concerning the Gentiles, and why he had receded from his former sentiments, which were the same with theirs. It is a debt we owe both to ourselves and to our brethren to set those actions of ours in a true light which at first looked ill and gave offence, that we may remove stumbling-blocks out of our brethren's way. Let us now see what Peter pleads in his own defence.

(1.) That he was instructed by a vision no longer to keep up the distinctions which were made by the ceremonial law; he relates the vision (v. 5, 6), as we had it before, *ch. x. 9, &c.* The sheet which was there said to be *let down to the earth* he here says came *even to him*, which circumstance intimates that it was particularly designed for instruction to him. We should thus see all God's discoveries of himself, which he has made to the children of men, coming even to us, applying them by faith to ourselves. Another circumstance here added is that when the sheet came to him he *fastened his eyes upon it, and considered it*, v. 6. If we would be led into the knowledge of divine things, we must fix our minds upon them, and consider them. He tells them what orders he had to eat of all sorts of meat without distinction, asking no questions for conscience's sake, v. 7. It was not till after the flood (as it should seem) that man was allowed to eat flesh at all, Gen. ix. 3. That allowance was afterwards limited by the ceremonial law; but now the restrictions were taken off, and the matter set at large again. It was not the design of Christ to abridge us in the use of our creature-comforts by any other law than that of



sobriety and temperance, and preferring the meat that endures to eternal life before that which perishes. He pleads that he was as averse to the thoughts of conversing with Gentiles, or eating of their dainties, as they could be, and therefore refused the liberty given him: *Not so, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has at any time entered into my mouth, v. 8.* But he was told from heaven that the case was now altered, that God had cleansed those persons and things which were before polluted; and therefore that he must no longer call them common, nor look upon them as unfit to be meddled with by the peculiar people (v. 9); so that he was not to be blamed for changing his thoughts, when God had changed the thing. In things of this nature we must act according to our present light; yet must not be so wedded to our opinion concerning them as to be prejudiced against further discoveries, when the matter may either be otherwise or appear otherwise; and God may reveal even this unto us, Phil. iii. 15. And, that they might be sure he was not deceived in it, he tells them it was done three times (v. 10), the same command given, to kill and eat, and the same reason, because that which God hath cleansed is not to be called common, repeated a second and third time. And, further to confirm him that it was a divine vision, the things he saw did not vanish away into the air, but were *drawn up again into heaven*, whence they were let down.

(2.) That he was particularly directed by the Spirit to go along with the messengers that Cornelius sent. And, that it might appear that the vision was designed to satisfy him in this matter, he observes to them the time when the messengers came—immediately after he had that vision; yet, lest this should not be sufficient to clear his way, the Spirit bade him *go with the men* that were then sent from Cesarea to him, *nothing doubting* (v. 11, 12); though they were Gentiles he went to, and went with, yet he must make no scruple of going along with them.

(3.) That he took some of his brethren along with him, who were of the circumcision, that they might be satisfied as well as he; and these he had brought up from Joppa, to witness for him with what caution he proceeded, foreseeing the offence that would be taken at it. He did not act separately, but with advice; not rashly, but upon due deliberation.

(4.) That Cornelius had a vision too, by which he was directed to send for Peter (v. 13): *He showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, that bade him send to Joppa for one Simon, whose surname is Peter.* See how good it is for those that have communion with God, and keep up a correspondence with heaven, to compare notes, and communicate their experiences to each other; for hereby they may strengthen one another's faith: Peter is the more confirmed in the

truth of his vision by Cornelius's, and Cornelius by Peter's. Here is something added in what the angel said to Cornelius; before it was, *Send for Peter, and he shall speak to thee, he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do* (ch. x. 6, 32); but here it is, "*He shall tell thee words whereby thou and thy house shall be saved* (v. 14), and therefore it is of vast concern to thee, and will be of unspeakable advantage, to send for him." Note, [1.] The words of the gospel are words whereby we may be saved, eternally saved; not merely by hearing them and reading them, but by believing and obeying them. They set the salvation before us, and show us what it is; they open the way of salvation to us, and, if we follow the method prescribed us by them, we shall certainly be saved from wrath and the curse, and be for ever happy. [2.] Those that embrace the gospel of Christ will have salvation brought by it to their families: "*Thou and all thy house shall be saved*; thou and thy children shall be taken into covenant, and have the means of salvation; thy house shall be as welcome to the benefit of the salvation, upon their believing, as thou thyself, even the meanest servant thou hast. *This day is salvation come to this house,*" Luke xix. 9. Hitherto salvation was of the Jews (John iv. 22), but now salvation is brought to the Gentiles as much as ever it was with the Jews; the promises, privileges, and means of it are conveyed to all nations as amply and fully, to all intents and purposes, as ever it had been appropriated to the Jewish nation.

(5.) That which put the matter past all dispute was the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Gentile hearers; this completed the evidence that it was the will of God that he should take the Gentiles into communion. [1.] The fact was plain and undeniable (v. 15): "*As I began to speak*" (and perhaps he felt some secret reluctance in his own breast, doubting whether he was in the right to preach to the uncircumcised), "*presently the Holy Ghost fell on them* in as visible signs as on us at the beginning, in which there could be no fallacy." Thus God attested what was done, and declared his approbation of it; that preaching is certainly right with which the Holy Ghost is given. The apostle supposes this, when he thus argues with the Galatians: *Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Gal. iii. 2. [2.] Peter was hereby put in mind of a saying of his Master's, when he was leaving them (ch. i. 5): *John baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost*, v. 16. This plainly intimated, *First*, That the Holy Ghost was the gift of Christ, and the product and performance of his promise, that great promise which he left with them when he went to heaven. It was therefore without doubt from him that this gift came; and the filling of them with the Holy Ghost was his act and deed. As it was promised by his

mouth, so it was performed by his hand, and was a token of his favour. *Secondly*, That the gift of the Holy Ghost was a kind of baptism. Those that received it were baptized with it in a more excellent manner than any of those that even the Baptist himself baptized with water. [3.] Comparing that promise, so worded, with this gift just now conferred, when the question was started, whether these persons should be baptized or no, he concluded that the question was determined by Christ himself (v. 17): "*Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did to us—gave it to us as believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to them upon their believing in him—What was I, that I could withstand God? Could I refuse to baptize them with water, whom God had baptized with the Holy Ghost? Could I deny the sign to those on whom he had conferred the thing signified? But, as for me, who was I? What! able to forbid God? Did it become me to control the divine will, or to oppose the counsels of Heaven?*" Note, Those who hinder the conversion of souls withstand God; and those take too much upon them who contrive how to exclude from their communion those whom God has taken into communion with himself.

IV. This account which Peter gave of the matter satisfied them, and all was well. Thus, when the two tribes and a half gave an account to Phinehas and the princes of Israel of the true intent and meaning of their building themselves an altar on the banks of Jordan, the controversy was dropped, and it pleased them that it was so, Josh. xxii. 30. Some people, when they have fastened a censure upon a person, will stick to it, though afterwards it appear ever so plainly to be unjust and groundless. It was not so here; for these brethren, though they were of the circumcision, and their bias went the other way, yet, when they heard this, 1. They let fall their censures: they held their peace, and said no more against what Peter had done; they laid their hand upon their mouth, because now they perceived that God did it. Now those who prided themselves in their dignities as Jews began to see that God was staining their pride, by letting in the Gentiles to share, and to share equally, with them. And now that prophecy was fulfilled, *Thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain*, Zeph. iii. 11. 2. They turned them into praises. They not only held their peace from quarrelling with Peter, but opened their mouths to glorify God for what he had done by and with Peter's ministry; they were thankful that their mistake was rectified, and that God had shown more mercy to the poor Gentiles than they were inclined to show them, saying, *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life!* He hath granted them not only the means of repentance, in opening a door of entrance for his ministers among them, but the grace of re-

pentance, in having given them his Holy Spirit, who, wherever he comes to be a Comforter, first convinces, and gives a sight of sin and sorrow for it, and then a sight of Christ and joy in him. Note, (1.) Repentance, if it be true, is unto life. It is to spiritual life; all that truly repent of their sins evidence it by living a new life, a holy, heavenly, and divine life. Those that by repentance die unto sin thenceforward live unto God; and then, and not till then, we begin to live indeed, and it shall be to eternal life. All true penitents shall live, that is, they shall be restored to the favour of God, which is life, which is better than life; they shall be comforted with the assurance of the pardon of their sins, and shall have the earnest of eternal life, and at length the fruition of it. (2.) Repentance is God's gift; it is not only his free grace that accepts it, but his mighty grace that works it in us, that *takes away the heart of stone, and gives us a heart of flesh*. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; it is he that provides himself this lamb. (3.) Wherever God designs to give life he gives repentance; for this is a necessary preparative for the comforts of a sealed pardon and a settled peace in this world, and for the seeing and enjoying of God in the other world. (4.) It is a great comfort to us that God has exalted his Son Jesus, not only to *give repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins* (ch. v. 31), but to the Gentiles also.

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. 20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. 22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. 25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26 And when he had found him, he



brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

We have here an account of the planting and watering of a church at Antioch, the chief city of Syria, reckoned afterwards the third most considerable city of the empire, only Rome and Alexandria being preferred before it, next to whose patriarch that of Antioch took place. It stood where Hamath or Riblah did, which we read of in the Old Testament. It is suggested that Luke, the penman of this history, as well as Theophilus, to whom he dedicates it, was of Antioch, which may be the reason why he takes more particular notice of the success of the gospel at Antioch, as also because there it was that Paul began to be famous, towards the story of whom he is hastening. Now concerning the church at Antioch observe,

I. The first preachers of the gospel there were such as were dispersed from Jerusalem by persecution, that persecution which arose five or six years ago (as some compute), at the time of Stephen's death (v. 19): *They travelled as far as Phenice and other places preaching the word.* God suffered them to be persecuted, that thereby they might be dispersed in the world, sown as seed to God, in order to their bringing forth much fruit. Thus what was intended for the hurt of the church was made to work for its good; as Jacob's curse of the tribe of Levi (*I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel*) was turned into a blessing. The enemies designed to scatter and lose them, Christ designed to scatter and use them. Thus the wrath of man is made to praise God. Observe,

1. Those that fled from persecution did not flee from their work; though for the time they declined suffering, yet they did not decline service; nay, they threw themselves into a larger field of opportunity than before. Those that persecuted the preachers of the gospel hoped thereby to prevent their carrying it to the Gentile world; but it proved that they did but hasten it the sooner. *Howbeit, they meant not so, neither did their heart think so.* Those that were persecuted in one city fled to another; but they carried their religion along with them, not only that they might take the comfort of it themselves, but that they might communicate it to others, thus showing that when they got out of the way it was not because they were afraid of suffering, but because they were willing to reserve themselves for further service.

2. They pressed forward in their work, finding that the good pleasure of the Lord prospered in their hands. When they had preached successfully in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, they got out of the borders of the

land of Canaan, and travelled into Phoenicia, into the island of Cyprus, and into Syria. Though the further they travelled the more they exposed themselves, yet they travelled on; *plus ultra—further still*, was their motto; grudging no pains, and dreading no perils, in carrying on so good a work, and serving so good a Master.

3. They preached the word to none but to the Jews only who were dispersed in all those parts, and had synagogues of their own, in which they met with them by themselves, and preached to them. They did not yet understand that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs, and of the same body; but left the Gentiles either to turn Jews, and so come into the church, or else remain as they were.

4. They particularly applied themselves to the Hellenist Jews, here called the Grecians, that were at Antioch. Many of the preachers were natives of Judea and Jerusalem; but some of them were by birth of Cyprus and Cyrene, as Barnabas himself (ch. iv. 36), and Simon (Mark xv. 21), but had their education in Jerusalem; and these, being themselves Grecian Jews, had a particular concern for those of their own denomination and distinction, and applied themselves closely to them at Antioch. Dr. Lightfoot says that they were there called *Hellenists*, or *Grecians*, because they were Jews of the corporation or enfranchisement of the city; for Antioch was a Syro-grecian city. To them they preached the Lord Jesus. This was the constant subject of their preaching; what else should the ministers of Christ preach, but Christ—Christ, and him crucified—Christ, and him glorified?

5. They had wonderful success in their preaching, v. 21. (1.) Their preaching was accompanied with a divine power: *The hand of the Lord was with them*, which some understand of the power they were endued with to work miracles for the confirming of their doctrine; in these the Lord was working with them, for he confirmed the word with signs following (Mark xvi. 20); in these God bore them witness, Heb. ii. 4. But I rather understand it of the power of divine grace working on the hearts of the hearers, and opening them, as Lydia's heart was opened, because many saw the miracles who were not converted; but when by the Spirit the understanding was enlightened, and the will bowed to the gospel of Christ, that was a day of power, in which volunteers were enlisted under the banner of the Lord Jesus, Ps. cx. 3. *The hand of the Lord was with them*, to bring that home to the hearts and consciences of men which they could but speak to the outward ear. Then the word of the Lord gains its end, when the hand of the Lord goes along with it, to write it in their heart. Then people are brought to believe the report of the gospel, when with it the arm of the Lord is revealed (Isa. liii. 1), when God teaches with a strong hand, Isa. viii. 11. These were



not apostles, but ordinary ministers, yet they had the hand of the Lord with them, and did wonders. (2.) Abundance of good was done: *A great number believed, and turned unto the Lord*—many more than could have been expected, considering the outward disadvantages they laboured under: some of all sorts of people were wrought upon, and brought into obedience to Christ. Observe, What the change was. [1.] They believed; they were convinced of the truth of the gospel, and subscribed to the record God had given in it concerning his Son. [2.] The effect and evidence of this was that they *turned unto the Lord*. They could not be said to turn from the service of idols, for they were Jews, worshippers of the true God only; but they turned from a confidence in the righteousness of the law, to rely only upon the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness which is by faith; they turned from a loose, careless, carnal way of living, to live a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life; they turned from worshipping God in show and ceremony, to worship him *in spirit and in truth*. They turned to the Lord Jesus, and he became all in all with them. This was the work of conversion wrought upon them, and it must be wrought upon every one of us. It was the fruit of their faith. All that sincerely believe will turn to the Lord; for, whatever we profess or pretend, we do not really believe the gospel if we do not cordially embrace Christ offered to us in the gospel.

II. The good work thus begun at Antioch was carried on to great perfection; and the church, thus founded, grew to be a flourishing one, by the ministry of Barnabas and Saul, who built upon the foundation which the other preachers had laid, and *entered into their labours*, John iv. 37, 38.

1. The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas thither, to nurse this new-born church, and to strengthen the hands both of preachers and people, and put a reputation upon the cause of Christ there.

(1.) They heard the good news, that the gospel was received at Antioch, v. 22. The apostles there were inquisitive how the work went on in the countries about; and, it is likely, kept up a correspondence with all parts where preachers were, so that *tidings of these things*, of the great numbers that were converted at Antioch, soon *came to the ears of the church that was in Jerusalem*. Those that are in the most eminent stations in the church ought to concern themselves for those in a lower sphere.

(2.) They despatched Barnabas to them with all speed; they desired him to go, and assist and encourage these hopeful beginnings. They *sent him forth* as an envoy from them, and a representative of their whole body, to congratulate them upon the success of the gospel among them, as matter of rejoicing both to preachers and hearers,

and with both they rejoiced. He must go *as far as Antioch*. It was a great way, but, far as it was, he was willing to undertake the journey for a public service. It is probable that Barnabas had a particular genius for work of this kind, was active and conversable, loved to be in motion, and delighted in doing good abroad as much as others in doing good at home, was as much of Zebulun's spirit, who rejoiced *in his going out*, as others are of Issachar's, who rejoiced *in his tent*; and, his talent lying this way, he was fittest to be employed in this work. God gives various gifts for various services.

(3.) Barnabas was wonderfully pleased to find that the gospel got ground, and that some of his countrymen, men of Cyprus (of which country he was, *ch. iv. 36*) were instrumental in it (v. 23): *When he came, and had seen the grace of God*, the tokens of God's good-will to the people of Antioch and the evidences of his good work among them, *he was glad*. He took time to make his observations, and not only in their public worship, but in their common conversations and in their families, he saw the grace of God among them. Where the grace of God is it will be seen, as the *tree is known by its fruits*; and, where it is seen, it ought to be owned. What we see which is good in any we must call God's grace in them, and give that grace the glory of it; and we ought ourselves to take the comfort of it, and make it the matter of our rejoicing. We must be glad to see the grace of God in others, and the more when we see it where we did not expect it.

(4.) He did what he could to fix them, to confirm those in the faith who were converted to the faith. He *exhorted them*—*παρεκάλει*. It is the same word with that by which the name of Barnabas is interpreted (*ch. iv. 36*), *υἱὸς παρακλήσεως*—*a son of exhortation*; his talent lay that way, and he traded with it; let him that *exhorteth attend to exhortation*, Rom. xii. 8. Or, being a *son of consolation* (for so we render the word), he *comforted or encouraged them with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord*. The more he rejoiced in the beginning of the good work among them, the more earnest he was with them to proceed according to these good beginnings. Those we have comfort in we should exhort. Barnabas was glad for what he saw of the grace of God among them, and therefore was the more earnest with them to persevere. [1.] *To cleave to the Lord*. Note, Those that have *turned to the Lord* are concerned to *cleave unto the Lord*, not to fall off from following him, not to flag and tire in following him. *To cleave to the Lord* Jesus is to live a life of dependence upon him and devotedness to him: not only to hold him fast, but to hold fast by him, to be *strong in the Lord and in the power of his might*. [2.] *To cleave to him with purpose of heart*, with an intelligent, firm, and deliberate resolution, founded upon good grounds, and fixed upon



that foundation, Ps. cviii. 1. It is to bind our souls with a bond to be the Lord's, and to say as Ruth, *Entreat me not to leave him, or to return from following after him.*

(5.) Herein he gave a proof of his good character (v. 24): *He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith*, and approved himself so upon this occasion. [1.] He showed himself to be a man of a very sweet, affable, courteous disposition, that had himself the art of obliging, and could teach others. He was not only a righteous man, but a *good man*, a good-tempered man. Ministers that are so recommend themselves and their doctrine very much to the good opinion of those that are without. He was a good man, that is, a charitable man; so he had approved himself, when he sold an estate, and gave the money to the poor, *ch. iv. 37.*

[2.] By this it appeared that he was richly endued with the gifts and graces of the Spirit. The goodness of his natural disposition would not have qualified him for this service if he had not been *full of the Holy Ghost, and so full of power by the Spirit of the Lord.* [3.] He was full of faith, full of the Christian faith himself, and therefore desirous to propagate it among others; full of the grace of faith, and full of the fruits of that faith that works by love. He was *sound in the faith*, and therefore pressed them to be so.

(6.) He was instrumental to do good, by bringing in those that were without, as well as by building up those that were within: *Much people were added to the Lord*, and thereby added to the church; many were turned to the Lord before, yet more are to be turned; it is *done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.*

2. Barnabas went to fetch Saul, to join with him in the work of the gospel at Antioch. The last news we heard of him was that, when his life was sought at Jerusalem, he was sent away to Tarsus, the city where he was born, and, it should seem, he continued there ever since, doing good, no doubt. But now Barnabas takes a journey to Tarsus on purpose to see what had become of him, to tell him what a door of opportunity was opened at Antioch, and to desire him to come and spend some time with him there, *v. 25, 26.* And here also it appears that Barnabas was a good sort of a man in two things:—

(1.) That he would take so much pains to bring an active useful man out of obscurity. It was he that introduced Saul to the disciples at Jerusalem, wher. they were shy of him; and it was he that brought him out of the corner into which he was driven, into a more public station. It is a very good work to fetch a candle from under a bushel, and to set it in a candlestick. (2.) That he would bring in Saul at Antioch, who, being a *chief speaker* (*ch. xiv. 12*), and probably a more popular preacher, would be likely to eclipse him there, by outshining him; but Barnabas

is very willing to be eclipsed when it is for the public service. If God by his grace inclines us to do what good we can, according to the ability we have, we ought to rejoice if others that have also larger capacities have larger opportunities, and do more good than we can do. Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch, though it might be the lessening of himself, to teach us to seek the things of Christ more than our own things.

3. We are here further told,

(1.) What service was now done to the church at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas continued there a whole year, presiding in their religious assemblies, and preaching the gospel, *v. 26.* Observe, [1.] The church frequently assembled. The religious assemblies of Christians are appointed by Christ for his honour, and the comfort and benefit of his disciples. God's people of old frequently came together, *at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation*; places of meeting are now multiplied, but they must come together, though it be with difficulty and peril. [2.] Ministers were the masters of those assemblies, and held those courts in Christ's name to which all that hold by, from, and under him, owe suit and service. [3.] *Teaching the people* is one part of the work of ministers, when they preside in religious assemblies. They are not only to be the people's mouth to God in prayer and praise, but God's mouth to the people in opening the scriptures, and teaching out of them the good knowledge of the Lord. [4.] It is a great encouragement to ministers when they have opportunity of teaching much people, of casting the net of the gospel where there is a large shoal of fish, in hopes that the more may be enclosed. [5.] Preaching is not only for the conviction and conversion of those that are without, but for the instruction and edification of those that are within. A constituted church must have its teachers.

(2.) What honour was now put upon the church at Antioch: *There the disciples were first called Christians*; it is probable they called themselves so, incorporated themselves by that title, whether by some solemn act of the church or ministers, or whether this name insensibly obtained there by its being frequently used in their praying and preaching, we are not told; but it should seem that two such great men as Paul and Barnabas continuing there so long, being exceedingly followed, and meeting with no opposition, Christian assemblies made a greater figure there than any where, and became more considerable, which was the reason of their being called *Christians* first there, which, if there were to be a mother-church to rule over all other churches, would give Antioch a better title to the honour than Rome can pretend to. Hitherto those who gave up their names to Christ were called *disciples, learners, scholars*, trained up under him, in order to their being employed by him; but henceforward they

were called *Christians*. [1.] Thus the reproachful names which their enemies had hitherto branded them with would, perhaps, be superseded and disused. They called them *Nazarenes* (ch. 24, 5), *the men of that way, that by-way*, which had no name; and thus they prejudiced people against them. To remove the prejudice, they gave themselves a name which their enemies could not but say was proper. [2.] Thus those who before their conversion had been distinguished by the names of Jews and Gentiles might after their conversion be called by one and the same name, which would help them to forget their former dividing names, and prevent their bringing their former marks of distinction, and with them the seeds of contention, into the church. Let not one say, "I was a *Jew*;" nor the other, "I was a *Gentile*;" when both the one and the other must now say, "I am a *Christian*." [3.] Thus they studied to do honour to their Master, and showed that they were not ashamed to own their relation to him, but gloried in it; as the scholars of Plato called themselves *Platonists*, and so the scholars of other great men. They took their denomination not from the name of his person, *Jesus*, but of his office, *Christ*—*anointed*, so putting their creed into their names, *that Jesus is the Christ*; and they were willing all the world should know that this is the truth they will live and die by. Their enemies will turn this name to their reproach, and impute it to them as their crime, but they will glory in it: *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile*. [4.] Thus they now owned their dependence upon Christ, and their receivings from him; not only that they believed in him who is *the anointed*, but that through him they themselves had *the anointing*, 1 John ii. 20, 27. And God is said to have *anointed us in Christ*, 2 Cor. i. 21. [5.] Thus they laid upon themselves, and all that should ever profess that name, a strong and lasting obligation to submit to the laws of Christ, to follow the example of Christ, and to devote themselves entirely to the honour of Christ—to be to him for a name and a praise. Are we Christians? Then we ought to think, and speak, and act, in every thing as becomes Christians, and to do nothing to the reproach of that worthy name by which we are called; that that may not be said to us which Alexander said to a soldier of his own name that was noted for a coward, *Aut nomen, aut mores muta—Either change thy name or mend thy manners*. And as we must look upon ourselves as Christians, and carry ourselves accordingly, so we must look upon others as Christians, and carry ourselves towards them accordingly. A Christian, though not in every thing of our mind, should be loved and respected for his sake whose name he bears, because he belongs to Christ. [6.] Thus the scripture was fulfilled, for so it was written (Isa. lxii. 2) concerning the gospel-

church, *Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name* And it is said to the corrupt and degenerate church of the Jews, *The Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name*, Isa. lxxv. 15.

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

When our Lord Jesus *ascended on high he gave gifts unto men*, not only apostles and evangelists, but prophets, who were enabled by the Spirit to foresee and foretell things to come, which not only served for a confirmation of the truth of Christianity (for all that these prophets foretold came to pass, which proved that *they were sent of God*, Deut. xviii. 22; Jer. xxviii. 9), but was also of great use to the church, and served very much for its guidance. Now here we have,

I. A visit which some of these prophets made to Antioch (v. 27): *In these days*, during that year that Barnabas and Saul lived at Antioch, there came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch: we are not told how many, nor is it certain whether these were any of those prophets that we afterwards find in the church at Antioch, ch. xiii. 1. 1. They came from Jerusalem, probably because they were not now so much regarded there as they had been; they saw their work in a manner done there, and therefore thought it time to be gone. Jerusalem had been infamous for *killing the prophets* and abusing them, and therefore is now justly deprived of these prophets. 2. They came to Antioch, because they heard of the flourishing state of that church, and there they hoped they might be of some service. Thus should every one as he hath received the gift minister the same. Barnabas came to exhort them, and they, having received the exhortation well, now have prophets sent them to show them things to come, as Christ had promised, John xvi. 13. Those that are faithful in their little shall be entrusted with more. The best understanding of scripture-predictions is to be got in the way of obedience to scripture-instructions.

II. A particular prediction of a famine approaching, delivered by one of these prophets, his name *Agabus*; we read of him again prophesying Paul's imprisonment, ch. xxi. 10, 11. Here he stood up, probably in one of their public assemblies, and pro-



phesied, v. 28. Observe, 1. Whence he had his prophecy. What he said was not of himself, nor a fancy of his own, nor an astronomical prediction, nor a conjecture upon the present workings of second causes, but *he signified it by the Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy, that there should be a famine*; as Joseph, by the Spirit enabling him, understood Pharaoh's dreams, foretold the famine in Egypt, and Elijah the famine in Israel in Ahab's time. Thus God revealed his secrets to his servants the prophets. 2. What the prophecy was: *There should be great dearth throughout all the world*, by unseasonable weather, that corn should be scarce and dear, so that many of the poor should perish for want of bread. This should be not in one particular country, but *through all the world*, that is, all the Roman empire, which they in their pride, like Alexander before them, called *the world*. Christ had foretold in general *that there should be famines* (Matt. xxiv. 7; Mark xiii. 8; Luke xxi. 11); but Agabus foretels one very remarkable famine now at hand. 3. The accomplishment of it: *It came to pass in the days of Claudius Cesar*; it began in the second year of his reign, and continued to the fourth, if not longer. Several of the Roman historians make mention of it, as does also Josephus. God sent them the bread of life, and they rejected it, loathed the plenty of that manna; and therefore God justly broke the staff of bread, and punished them with famine; and herein he was righteous. They were barren, and did not bring forth to God, and therefore God made the earth barren to them.

III. The good use they made of this prediction. When they were told of a famine at hand, they did not do as the Egyptians, hoard up corn for themselves; but, as became Christians, laid by for charity to relieve others, which is the best preparative for our own sufferings and want. It is promised to those that *consider the poor that God will preserve them, and keep them alive, and they shall be blessed upon the earth*, Ps. xli. 1, 2. And *those who show mercy, and give to the poor, shall not be ashamed in the evil time, but in the days of famine they shall be satisfied*, Ps. xxxvii. 19, 21. The best provision we can lay up against a dear time is to lay up an interest in these promises, by doing good, and communicating, Luke xii. 33. Many give it as a reason why they should be sparing, but the scripture gives it as a reason why we should be liberal, *to seven, and also to eight, because we know not what evil shall be upon the earth*, Eccl. xi. 2. Observe,

1. What they determined—that *every man, according to his ability, should send relief to the brethren that dwelt in Judea*, v. 29. (1.) The persons that were recommended to them as objects of charity were *the brethren that dwelt in Judea*. Though we must, as we have opportunity, *do good to all men*, yet we

must have a special regard *to the household of faith*, Gal. vi. 10. No poor must be neglected, but God's poor most particularly regarded. The care which every particular church ought to take of their own poor we were taught by the early instance of that in the church at Jerusalem, where the ministration was so constant *that none lacked*, ch. iv. 34. But the communion of saints in that instance is here extended further, and provision is made by the church at Antioch for the relief of the poor in Judea, whom they call their brethren. It seems it was the custom of the Jews of the dispersion to send money to those Jews who dwelt in Judea, for the relief of the poor that were among them, and to make collections for that purpose (Tully speaks of such a thing in his time, *Orat. pro Flacco*), which supposes there were many poor in Judea, more than in other countries, so that the rich among them were not able to bear the charge of keeping them from starving; either because their land had become *barren*, though it had been a fruitful land, *for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein*, or because they had no traffic with other nations. Now we may suppose that the greatest part of those who turned Christians in that country were the poor (Matt. xi. 5, *The poor are evangelized*), and also that when the poor turned Christians they were put out of the poor's book, and cut off from their shares in the public charity; and it were easy to foresee that if there came a famine it would go very hard with them; and, if any of them should perish for want, it would be a great reproach to the Christian profession; and therefore this early care was taken, upon notice of this famine coming, to send them a stock beforehand, lest, if it should be deferred till the famine came, it should be too late. (2.) The agreement there was among the disciples about it, that *every man should contribute, according to his ability, to this good work*. The Jews abroad, in other countries, grew rich by trade, and many of the rich Jews became Christians, whose abundance ought to be a supply to the want of their poor brethren that were at a great distance; for the case of such ought to be considered, and not theirs only that live among us. Charitable people are traders with what God has given them, and the merchants find their account in sending effects to countries that lie very remote; and so should we in giving alms to those afar off that need them, which therefore we should be forward to do when we are called to it. *Every man determined to send something, more or less, according to his ability, what he could spare from the support of himself and his family, and according as God had prospered him*. What may be said to be *according to our ability* we must judge for ourselves, but must be careful *that we judge righteous judgment*.

2. What they did—they did as they de-



terminated (v. 30). *Which also they did.* They not only talked of it, but they did it. Many a good motion of that kind is made and commended, but is not prosecuted, and so comes to nothing. But this was pursued, the collection was made, and was so considerable that they thought it worth while to send Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem, to carry it to the elders there, though they would want their labours in the mean time at Antioch. They sent it, (1.) *To the elders*, the presbyters, the ministers or pastors, *of the churches in Judea*, to be by them distributed according to the necessity of the receivers, as it had been contributed according to the ability of the givers. (2.) It was sent by Barnabas and Saul, who perhaps wanted an occasion to go to Jerusalem, and therefore were willing to take this. Josephus tells us that at this time king Irates sent his charity to the chief men of Jerusalem, for the poor of that country; and Helena, queen of the Adiabeni, being now at Jerusalem, and hearing of many that died of famine there, and in the country about, sent for provisions from Cyprus and Alexandria, and distributed them among the people; so says Dr. Lightfoot, who also computes, by the date of Paul's rapture, "fourteen years before he wrote the second Epistle to the Corinthians" (2 Cor. xii. 1, 2), that it was in this journey of his to Jerusalem, with these alms and offerings, that he had his trance in the temple (which he speaks of, ch. xxii. 17), and in that trance was rapt up into the third heaven; and then it was that Christ told him he would send him thence unto the Gentiles, which accordingly he did as soon as ever he came back to Antioch. It is no disparagement, in an extraordinary case, for ministers of the gospel to be messengers of the church's charity, though to undertake the constant care of that matter would ordinarily be too great a diversion from more needful work to those who have given themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.

## CHAP. XII.

In this chapter we have the story, 1. Of the martyrdom of James the apostle, and the imprisonment of Peter by Herod Agrippa, who now reigned as king in Judea, ver. 1—4. II. The miraculous deliverance of Peter out of prison by the ministry of an angel, in answer to the prayers of the church for him, ver. 5—19. III. The cutting off of Herod in the height of his pride by the stroke of an angel, the minister of God's justice (ver. 20—23); and this was done while Barnabas and Saul were at Jerusalem, upon the errand that the church of Antioch sent them on, to carry their charity; and therefore in the close we have an account of their return to Antioch, ver. 24, 25.

**N**OW about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) 4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered

him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Ever since the conversion of Paul, we have heard no more of the agency of the priests in persecuting the saints at Jerusalem; perhaps that wonderful change wrought upon him, and the disappointment it gave to their design upon the Christians at Damascus, had somewhat mollified them, and brought them under the check of Gamaliel's advice—to let those men alone, and see what would be the issue; but here the storm arises from another point. The civil power, not now, as usual (for aught that appears) stirred up by the ecclesiastics, acts by itself in the persecution. But Herod, though originally of an Edomite family, yet seems to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion; for Josephus says he was zealous for the Mosaic rites, a bigot for the ceremonies. He was not only (as Herod Antipas was) tetrarch of Galilee, but had also the government of Judea committed to him by Claudius the emperor, and resided most at Jerusalem, where he was at this time. Three things we are here told he did:—

I. He stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church, v. 1. His stretching forth his hands to it intimates that his hands had been tied up by the restraints which perhaps his own conscience held him under in this matter; but now he broke through them, and stretched forth his hands deliberately, and of malice prepense. Herod laid hands upon some of the church to afflict them, so some read it; he employed his officers to seize them, and take them into custody, in order to their being prosecuted. See how he advances gradually. 1. He began with some of the members of the church, certain of them that were of less note and figure; played first at small game, but afterwards flew at the apostles themselves. His spite was at the church, and, with regard to those he gave trouble to, it was not upon any other account, but because they belonged to the church, and so belonged to Christ. 2. He began with vexing them only, or afflicting them, imprisoning them, fining them, spoiling their houses and goods, and other ways molesting them; but afterwards he proceeded to greater instances of cruelty. Christ's suffering servants are thus trained up by less troubles for greater, that tribulation may work patience, and patience experience.

II. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, v. 2. We are here to consider, 1. Who the martyr was: it was James the brother of John; so called to distinguish him from the other James the brother of Joseph. This was called Jacobus major—James the greater; that, minor—the less. This who was here crowned with martyrdom was one of the first three of Christ's disciples,



one of those that were the witnesses of his transfiguration and agony, whereby he was prepared for martyrdom; he was one of those whom Christ called *Boanerges*—*Sons of thunder*; and perhaps by his powerful awakening, preaching he had provoked Herod, or those about him, as John Baptist did the other Herod, and that was the occasion of his coming into this trouble. He was one of those sons of Zebedee whom Christ told that they should drink of the cup that he was to drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was to be baptized with, Matt. xx. 23. And now those words of Christ were made good in him; but it was in order to his sitting at Christ's right hand; for if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. He was one of the twelve who were commissioned to disciple all nations; and to take him off now, before he had removed from Jerusalem, was like Cain's killing Abel when the world was to be peopled, and one man was then more than many at another time. To kill an apostle now was killing he knew not how many. But why would God permit it? If the blood of his saints, much more the blood of apostles, is precious in his eyes, and therefore, we may be sure, is not shed but upon a valuable consideration. Perhaps God intended hereby to awaken the rest of the apostles to disperse themselves among the nations, and not to nestle any longer at Jerusalem. Or it was to show that though the apostles were appointed to plant the gospel in the world, yet if they were taken off God could do his work without them, and would do it. The apostle died a martyr, to show the rest of them what they must expect, that they might prepare accordingly. The tradition that they have in the Romish church, that this James had been before this in Spain, and had planted the gospel there, is altogether groundless; nor is there any certainty of it, or good authority for it. 2. What kind of death he suffered: he was slain with the sword, that is, his head was cut off with a sword, which was looked upon by the Romans to be a more disgraceful way of being beheaded than with an axe; so Lorinus. Beheading was not ordinarily used among the Jews; but, when kings gave verbal orders for private and sudden executions, this manner of death was used, as most expeditious; and it is probable that this Herod killed James, as the other Herod killed John Baptist, privately in the prison. It is strange that we have not a more full and particular account of the martyrdom of this great apostle, as we had of Stephen. But even this short mention of the thing is sufficient to let us know that the first preachers of the gospel were so well assured of the truth of it that they sealed it with their blood, and thereby have encouraged us, if at any time we are called to it, to resist unto blood too. The Old-Testament martyrs were slain with the sword (Heb. xi. 37), and Christ came not to send peace, but a sword (Matt. x. 34), in preparation for which we

must arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and then we need not fear what the sword of men can do unto us.

III. He imprisoned Peter, of whom he had heard most, as making the greatest figure among the apostles and whom therefore he would be proud of the honour of taking off. Observe here, 1. When he had beheaded James, he proceeded further, he added, to take Peter also. Note, Blood to the blood-thirsty does but make them more so, and the way of persecution, as of other sins, is downhill; when men are in it, they cannot easily stop themselves; when they are in they find they must on. *Male facta male factis tegere ne perphant*—One evil deed is covered with another, so that there is no passage through them. Those that take one bold step in a sinful way give Satan advantage against them to tempt them to take another, and provoke God to leave them to themselves, to go from bad to worse. It is therefore our wisdom to take heed of the beginnings of sin. 2. He did this because he saw it pleased the Jews. Observe, The Jews made themselves guilty of the blood of James by showing themselves well pleased with it afterwards, though they had not excited Herod to it. There are accessaries *ex post facto*—after the fact; and those will be reckoned with as persecutors who take pleasure in others' persecuting, who delight to see good men ill used, and cry, *Aha, so would we have it*, or at least secretly approve of it. For bloody persecutors, when they perceive themselves applauded for that which every one ought to cry shame upon them for, are encouraged to go on, and have their hands strengthened and their hearts hardened, and the checks of their own consciences smothered; nay, it is as strong a temptation to them to do the like as it was here to Herod, because he saw it pleased the Jews. Though he had no reason to fear displeasing them if he did not, as Pilate condemned Christ, yet he hoped to please them by doing it, and so to make an interest among them, and make amends for displeasing them in something else. Note, Those make themselves an easy prey to Satan who make it their business to please men. 3. Notice is taken of the time when Herod laid hold on Peter: *Then were the days of unleavened bread*. It was at the feast of the passover, when their celebrating the memorial of their typical deliverance should have led them to the acceptance of their spiritual deliverance; instead of this, they, under pretence of zeal for the law, were most violently fighting against it, and, in the days of unleavened bread, were most soured and embittered with the old leaven of malice and wickedness. At the passover, when the Jews came from all parts to Jerusalem to keep the feast, they irritated one another against the Christians and Christianity, and were then more violent than at other times. 4. Here is an account of Peter's imprisonment (v. 4): *When he had laid hands on*

him, and, it is likely, examined him, *he put him in prison*, into the inner prison; some say, into the same prison into which he and the other apostles were cast some years before, and were rescued out of it by an angel, *ch. v. 18*. He was *delivered to four quarters of soldiers*, that is, to sixteen, who were to be a guard upon him, four at a time, that he should not make his escape, nor be rescued by his friends. Thus they thought they had him fast. 5. Herod's design was, *after Easter, to bring him forth unto the people*. (1.) He would make a spectacle of him. Probably he had put James to death privately, which the people had complained of, not because it was an unjust thing to put a man to death without giving him a public hearing, but because it deprived them of the satisfaction of seeing him executed; and therefore Herod, now he knows their minds, will gratify them with the sight of Peter in bonds, of Peter upon the block, that they may feed their eyes with such a pleasing spectacle. And very ambitious surely he was to please the people who was willing thus to please them! (2.) He would do this *after Easter, μετά τὸ πάσχα*—*after the passover*, certainly so it ought to be read, for it is the same word that is always so rendered; and to insinuate the introducing of a gospel-feast, instead of the passover, when we have nothing in the New Testament of such a thing, is to mingle Judaism with our Christianity. Herod would not condemn him till the passover was over, some think, for fear lest he should have such an interest among the people that they should demand the release of him, according to the custom of the feast: or, after the hurry of the feast was over, and the town was empty, he would entertain them with Peter's public trial and execution. Thus was the plot laid, and both Herod and the people long to have the feast over, that they may gratify themselves with this barbarous entertainment.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. 6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. 7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. 8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment

about thee, and follow me. 9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews. 12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. 14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. 15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. 16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished. 17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. 18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. 19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judæa to Cæsarea, and *there* abode.

We have here an account of Peter's deliverance out of prison, by which the design of Herod against him was defeated, and his life



preserved for further service, and a stop given to this bloody torrent. Now,

I. One thing that magnified his deliverance was that it was a signal answer to prayer (v. 5): *Peter was kept in prison with a great deal of care, so that it was altogether impossible, either by force or by stealth, to get him out. But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him*, for prayers and tears are the church's arms; therewith she fights, not only against her enemies, but for her friends: and to these means they have recourse. 1. The delay of Peter's trial gave them time for prayer. It is probable that James was hurried off so suddenly and so privately that they had not time to pray for him, God so ordering it that they should not have space to pray, when he designed they should not have the thing they prayed for. James must be offered upon the sacrifice and service of their faith, and therefore prayer for him is restrained and prevented; but Peter must be continued to them, and therefore prayer for him is stirred up, and time is given them for it, by Herod's putting off the prosecution. *Howbeit, he meant not so, neither did his heart think so.* 2. They were very particular in their prayers for him, that it would please God, some way or other, to defeat Herod's purpose, and to snatch the lamb out of the jaws of the lion. The death of James alarmed them to a greater fervency in their prayer for Peter; for, if they be broken thus with breach upon breach, they fear that the enemy will make a full end. Stephen is not, and James is not, and will they take Peter also? All these things are against them; this will be sorrow upon sorrow, Phil. ii. 27. Note, Though the death and sufferings of Christ's ministers may be made greatly to serve the interests of Christ's kingdom, yet it is the duty and concern of the church earnestly to pray for their life, liberty, and tranquillity; and sometimes Providence orders it that they are brought into imminent danger, to stir up prayer for them. 3. *Prayer was made without ceasing*; it was, *προσευχῇ ἐκτενῇ*—*fervent prayer*. It is the word that is used concerning Christ's praying in his agony *more earnestly*; it is the *fervent prayer of the righteous man, that is effectual, and availeth much*. Some think it denotes the constancy and continuance of their prayers; so we take it: *They prayed without ceasing*. It was an extended prayer; they prayed for his release in their public assemblies (private ones, perhaps, for fear of the Jews); then they went home, and prayed for it in their families; then retired into their closets, and prayed for it there; so *they prayed without ceasing*; or, first one knot of them, and then another, and then a third, kept a day of prayer; or rather a night of prayer, for him, v. 12. Note, Times of public distress and danger should be praying times with the church; we must pray always, but then especially.

II. Another thing that magnified his deliverance was that *when the king's commandment and decree drew near to be put in execution*, then his deliverance was wrought, as Esth. ix. 1, 2. Let us observe when his deliverance came. 1. It was the very night before Herod designed to bring him forth, which made it to be so much the greater consolation to his friends and confusion to his enemies. It is probable some who had an interest in Herod, or those about him, had been improving it to get a discharge for Peter, but in vain; Herod resolves he shall die. And now they despair of prevailing in this way, for to-morrow is *the day set for the bringing of him forth*; and, it is likely, they will make as quick work with him as with his Master; and now God opened a door of escape for him. Note, God's time to help is when things are brought to the last extremity, when there is none shut up nor left (Deut. xxxii. 36), and for this reason it has been said, "The worse the better." When Isaac is bound upon the altar, and the knife in the hand, and the hand stretched out to slay him, then *Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide*. 2. It was when he was *fast bound with two chains, between two soldiers*; so that if he offer to stir he wakes them; and, besides this, though the prison-doors, no doubt, were locked and bolted, yet, to make sure work, *the keepers before the door kept the prison*, that no one might so much as attempt to rescue him. Never could the art of man do more to secure a prisoner. Herod, no doubt, said, as Pilate (Matt. xxvii. 65), *Make it as sure as you can*. When men will think to be too hard for God, God will make it appear that he is too hard for them. 3. It was when he was *sleeping between the soldiers, fast asleep*; (1.) Not terrified with his danger, though it was very imminent, and there was no visible way for his escape. There was but a step between him and death, and yet he could lay himself down in peace, and sleep—sleep in the midst of his enemies—sleep when, it may be, they were awake, having a good cause that he suffered for, and a good conscience that he suffered with, and being assured that God would issue his trial that way that should be most for his glory. Having committed his cause to him that judgeth righteously, his soul dwells at ease; and even in prison, between two soldiers, God gives him sleep, as he doth to his beloved. (2.) Not expecting his deliverance. He did not keep awake, looking to the right hand, or to the left, for relief, but lay asleep, and was perfectly surprised with his deliverance. Thus the church (Ps. cxxvi. 1): *We were like those that dream*.

III. It also magnified his deliverance very much that an *angel was sent from heaven* on purpose to rescue him, which made his escape both practicable and warrantable. This angel brought him a legal discharge, and enabled him to make use of it.

1. *The angel of the Lord came upon him*;



*etern*—stood over him. He seemed as one abandoned by men, yet not forgotten of his God; *the Lord thinketh upon him*. Gates and guards kept all his friends from him, but could not keep the angels of God from him: *and they invisibly encamp round about those that fear God, to deliver them* (Ps. xxxiv. 7), *and therefore they need not fear, though a host of enemies encamp against them*, Ps. xxvii. 3. Wherever the people of God are, and however surrounded, they have a way open heavenward, nor can any thing intercept their intercourse with God.

2. *A light shone in the prison*. Though it is a dark place, and in the night, Peter shall see his way clear. Some observe that we do not find in the Old Testament that where angels appeared *the light shone round about them*; for that was a dark dispensation, and the glory of angels was then veiled. But in the New Testament, when mention is made of the appearing of the angels, notice is taken of the light that they appeared in; for it is by the gospel that the upper world is brought to light. The soldiers to whom Peter was chained were either struck into a deep sleep for the present (as Saul and his soldiers were when David carried off his spear and cruise of water), or, if they were awake, the appearance of the angel made them to *shake, and to become as dead men*, as it was with the guard set on Christ's sepulchre.

3. The angel awoke Peter, by giving him *a blow on his side*, a gentle touch, enough to rouse him out of his sleep, though so fast asleep that the light that shone upon him did not awaken him. When good people slumber in a time of danger, and are not awakened by the light of the word, and the discoveries it gives them, let them expect to be smitten on the side by some sharp affliction; better be raised up so than left asleep. The language of this stroke was, *Arise up quickly*; not as if the angel feared coming short by his delay, but Peter must not be indulged in it. When David hears *the sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry trees, then he must rise up quickly, and bestir himself*.

4. *His chains fell off from his hands*. It seems they had handcuffed him, to make him sure, but *God loosed his bands*; and, if they fall off from his hands, it is as well as if he had the strength of Samson to break them like threads of tow. Tradition makes a mighty rout about these chains, and tells a formal story that one of the soldiers kept them for a sacred relic, and they were long after presented to Eudoxia the empress, and I know not what miracles are said to have been wrought by them; and the Romish church keeps a feast on the first of August yearly in remembrance of Peter's chains, *Festum vinculorum Petri*—*The feast of Peter's chains*; whereas this was at the passover. Surely they are thus fond of Peter's chains in hopes with them to enslave the world!

5. He was ordered to dress himself immedi-

ately, and follow the angel; and he did so, v. 8, 9. When Peter was awake he knew not what to do but as the angel directed him. (1.) He must *gird himself*; for those that slept in their clothes ungirded themselves, so that they had nothing to do, when they got up, but to fasten their girdles. (2.) He must *bind on his sandals*, that he might be fit to walk. Those whose bonds are loosed by the power of divine grace must have *their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*. (3.) He must *cast his garments about him*, and come away as he was, and follow the angel; and he might go with a great deal of courage and cheerfulness who had a messenger from heaven for his guide and guard. He *went out, and followed him*. Those who are delivered out of a spiritual imprisonment must follow their deliverer, as Israel when they went out of the house of bondage did; they *went out, not knowing whither they went*, but whom they followed. Now it is said, when Peter went out after the angel, *he knew not that it was true which was done by the angel*, that it was really matter of fact, but *thought he saw a vision*; and, if he did, it was not the first he had seen: but by this it appears that a heavenly vision was so plain, and carried so much of its own evidence along with it, that it was difficult to distinguish between what was done in fact and what was done in vision. *When the Lord brought back the captivity of his people we were like those that dream*, Ps. cxxvi. 1. Peter was so; he thought the news was too good to be true.

6. He was led safely by the angel out of danger, v. 10. Guards were kept at one pass and at another, which they were to make their way through when they were out of the prison, and they did so without any opposition; nay, for aught that appears, without any discovery: either their eyes were closed, or their hands were tied, or their hearts failed them; so it was that the angel and Peter safely *passed the first and second ward*. Those watchmen represented the watchmen of the Jewish church, on whom God had *poured out a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear*, Rom. xi. 8. His *watchmen are blind, sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber*. But still there is an iron gate, after all, that will stop them, and, if the guards can but recover themselves, there they may recover their prisoner, as Pharaoh hoped to retake Israel at the Red Sea. However, up to that gate they march, and, like the Red Sea before Israel, it *opened to them*. They did not so much as put a hand to it, but it opened *of its own accord*, by an invisible power; and thus was fulfilled in the letter what was figuratively promised to Cyrus (Isa. xlv. 1, 2): *I will open before him the two-leaved gates, will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron*. And probably the iron gate shut again of itself, that none of the guards might pursue Peter. Note, When God will work



salvation for his people, no difficulties in their way are insuperable; but even gates of iron are made to open of their own accord. This iron gate led him into the city out of the castle or tower; whether within the gates of the city or without is not certain, so that, when they were through this, they were got into the street. This deliverance of Peter represents to us our redemption by Christ, which is often spoken of as the setting of prisoners free, not only the proclaiming of liberty to the captives, but the *bringing of them out of the prison-house*. The application of the redemption in the conversion of souls is the *sending forth of the prisoners, by the blood of the covenant, out of the pit wherein is no water*, Zech. ix. 11. The grace of God, like this angel of the Lord, brings light first into the prison, by the opening of the understanding, smites the sleeping sinner on the side by the awakening of the conscience, causes the chains to fall off from the hands by the renewing of the will, and then gives the word of command, *Gird thyself, and follow me*. Difficulties are to be passed through, and the opposition of Satan and his instruments, a first and second ward, an untoward generation, from which we are concerned to save ourselves; and we shall be saved by the grace of God, if we put ourselves under the divine conduct. And at length the iron gate shall be opened to us, to enter into the New Jerusalem, where we shall be perfectly freed from all the marks of our captivity, and brought into the *glorious liberty of the children of God*.

7. When this was done, *the angel departed from him*, and left him to himself. He was out of danger from his enemies, and needed no guard. He knew where he was, and how to find out his friends, and needed no guide, and therefore his heavenly guard and guide bids him farewell. Note, Miracles are not to be expected when ordinary means are to be used. When Peter has now no more wards to pass, nor iron gates to get through, he needs only the ordinary invisible ministration of the angels, who encamp round about those that fear God, and deliver them.

IV. Having seen how his deliverance was magnified, we are next to see how it was manifested both to himself and others, and how, being made great, it was made known. We are here told,

1. How Peter came to himself, and so came himself to the knowledge of it, v. 11. So many strange and surprising things coming together upon a man just awoke out of sleep put him for the present into some confusion; so that he knew not where he was, nor what he did, nor whether it was fancy or fact; but at length Peter *came to himself*, was thoroughly awake, and found that it was not a dream, but a real thing: "*Now I know of a surety*, now I know ἀληθῶς—*truly*, now I know that it is truth, and not an illusion of the fancy. Now I am well satisfied con-

cerning it that *the Lord Jesus hath sent his angel*, for angels are subject to him and go on his errands, and by him *hath delivered me out of the hands of Herod*, who thought he had me fast, and so hath disappointed *all the expectation of the people of the Jews*, who doubted not to see Peter cut off the next day, and hoped it was the one neck of Christianity, in which it would all be struck off at one blow." For this reason it was a cause of great expectation, among not only the common people, but the great people of the Jews. Peter, when he recollected himself, *perceived of a truth* what great things God had done for him, which at first he could not believe for joy. Thus souls who are delivered out of a spiritual bondage are not at first aware what God has wrought in them. Many have the truth of grace that want the evidence of it. They are questioning whether there be indeed this change wrought in them, or whether they have not been all this while in a dream. But *when the Comforter comes, whom the Father will send* sooner or later, he will let them know of a surety what a blessed change is wrought in them, and what a happy state they are brought into.

2. How Peter came to his friends, and brought the knowledge of it to them. Here is a particular account of this, and it is very interesting.

(1.) He *considered the thing* (v. 12), considered how imminent his danger was, how great his deliverance; and now what has he to do? What improvement must he make of this deliverance? What must he do next? God's providence leaves room for the use of our prudence; and, though he has undertaken to perform and perfect what he has begun, yet he expects we should consider the thing.

(2.) He went directly to a friend's house, which, it is likely, lay near to the place where he was; it was the house of Mary, a sister of Barnabas, and mother of John Mark, whose house, it should seem, was frequently made use of for the private meeting of the disciples, either because it was large, and would hold many, or because it lay obscure, or because she was more forward than others were to open her doors to them; and, no doubt, it was, like the house of Obbedom, blessed for the ark's sake. A church in the house makes it a little sanctuary.

(3.) There he found many that were *gathered together praying*, at the dead time of the night, praying for Peter, who was the next day to come upon his trial, that God would find out some way or other for his deliverance. Observe, [1.] They continued in prayer, in token of their importunity; they did not think it enough once to have presented his case to God, but they did it again and again. 'Thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint. As long as we are kept waiting for a mercy we must continue praying for it. [2.] It should seem that now when the affair came near to a crisis, and the

very next day was fixed for the determining of it, they were more fervent in prayer than before; and it was a good sign that God intended to deliver Peter when he thus stirred up a spirit of prayer for his deliverance, for he never said to the seed of Jacob, *Seek ye my face in vain*. [3.] They gathered together for prayer on this occasion; though this would make them obnoxious to the government if they were discovered, yet they know what an encouragement Christ gave to joint-prayer, Matt. xviii. 19, 20. And it was always the practice of God's praying people to unite their forces in prayer, as 2 Chron. xx. 4; Esth. iv. 16. [4.] They were many that were got together for this work, as many perhaps as the room would hold; and first one prayed, and then another, of those who gave themselves to the word and prayer, the rest joining with them; or, if they had not ministers among them, no doubt but there were many private Christians that knew how to pray, and to pray pertinently, and to continue long in prayer when the affections of those who joined were so stirred as to keep pace with them upon such an occasion. This was in the night, when others were asleep, which was an instance both of their prudence and of their zeal. Note, It is good for Christians to have private meetings for prayer, especially in times of distress, and not to let fall nor forsake such assemblies. [5.] Peter came to them when they were thus employed, which was an immediate present answer to their prayer. It was as if God should say, "You are praying that Peter may be restored to you; now here he is." *While they are yet speaking, I will hear*, Isa. lxxv. 24. Thus the angel was sent with an answer of peace to Daniel's prayer, *while he was praying*, Dan ix. 20, 21. *Ask, and it shall be given*.

(4.) He knocked at the gate, and had much ado to get them to let him in (v. 13—16): *Peter knocked at the door of the gate*, designing by it to awaken them out of their sleep, and, for aught that appears, not knowing that he disturbed them in their devotions. Yet, if his friends were permitted to speak with him in private in the prison, it is possible he might know of this appointment, and it was this which he recollected and considered when he determined to go to that house, where he knew he should find many of his friends together. Now when he knocked there, [1.] *A damsel came to hearken*; not to open the door till she knew who was there, a friend or a foe, and what their business was, fearing informers. Whether this damsel was one of the family or one of the church, whether a servant or a daughter, does not appear; it should seem, by her being named, that she was of note among the Christians, and more zealously affected to the better part than most of her age. [2.] She knew Peter's voice, having often heard him pray, and preach, and discourse, with a great deal of pleasure. But, instead of letting him in immediately out of the cold,

*she opened not the gate for gladness*. Thus sometimes, in a transport of affection to our friends, we do that which is unkind. In an ecstasy of joy she forgets herself, and *opened not the gate*. [3.] She ran in, and probably went up to an upper room where they were together, and told them that Peter was certainly at the gate, though she had not courage enough to open the gate, for fear she should be deceived, and it should be the enemy. But, when she spoke of Peter's being there, they said, "*Thou art mad*; it is impossible it should be he, for he is in prison." Sometimes that which we most earnestly wish for we are most backward to believe, because we are afraid of imposing upon ourselves, as the disciples, who, when Christ had risen, *believed not for joy*. However, she stood to it that it was he. Then said they, *It is his angel*, v. 15. First, "It is a messenger from him, that makes use of his name;" so some take it; ἀγγελος often signifies no more than a messenger. It is used of John's messengers (Luke vii. 24, 27), of Christ's, Luke ix. 52. When the damsel was confident it was Peter, because she knew his voice, they thought it was because he that stood at the door had called himself Peter, and therefore offer this solution of the difficulty, "It is one that comes with an errand from him, and thou didst mistake as if it had been he himself." Dr. Hammond thinks this the easiest way of understanding it. Secondly, "It is his guardian angel, or some other angel that has assumed his shape and voice, and stands at the gate in his resemblance." Some think that they supposed his angel to appear as a presage of his death approaching; and this agrees with a notion which the vulgar have, that sometimes before persons have died *their ward has been seen*, that is, some spirit exactly in their likeness for countenance and dress, when they themselves have been at the same time in some other place; they call it their *ward*, that is, their angel, who is their guard. If so, they concluded this an ill omen, that their prayers were denied, and that the language of the apparition was, "Let it suffice you, Peter must die, say no more of that matter." And, if we understand it so, it only proves that they had then such an opinion of a man's *ward* being seen a little before his death, but does not prove that there is such a thing. Others think they took this to be an angel from heaven, sent to bring them a grant to their prayers. But why should they imagine that angel to assume the voice and shape of Peter, when we find not any thing like it in the appearance of angels? Perhaps they herein spoke the language of the Jews, who had a fond conceit that every good man has a particular tutelar angel, that has the charge of him, and sometimes personates him. The heathen called it a *good genius*, that attended a man; but, since no other scripture speaks of such a thing, this alone is too weak to bear the



weight of such a doctrine. We are sure that the angels are *ministering spirits* for the good of the *heirs of salvation*, that they have a *charge concerning them*, and *pitch their tents round about them*; and we need not be solicitous that every particular saint should have his guardian angel, when we are assured he has a guard of angels.

(5.) At length they let him in (v. 16): *He continued knocking* though they delayed to open to him, and at last they admitted him. The iron gate which opposed his enlargement opened of itself, without so much as once knocking at it; but the door of his friend's house that was to welcome him does not open of its own accord, but must be knocked at, long knocked at; lest Peter should be puffed up by the honours which the angel did him, he meets with this mortification, by a seeming slight which his friends put upon him. But, *when they saw him, they were astonished*, were filled with wonder and joy in him, as much as they were but just now with sorrow and fear concerning him. It was both surprising and pleasing to them in the highest degree.

(6.) Peter gave them an account of his deliverance. When he came to the company that were gathered together with so much zeal to pray for him, they gathered about him with no less zeal to congratulate him on his deliverance; and herein they were so noisy that when Peter himself begged them to consider what peril he was yet in, if they should be overheard, he could not make them hear him, but was forced to *beckon to them with the hand to hold their peace*, and had much ado thereby to command silence, while *he declared unto them how the Lord Jesus had by an angel brought him out of prison*; and it is very likely, having found them praying for his deliverance, he did not part with them till he and they had together solemnly given thanks to God for his enlargement; or, if he could not stay to do it, it is probable they staid together to do it; for what is won by prayer must be worn with praise; and God must always have the glory of that which we have the comfort of. When David declares *what God had done for his soul*, he blesses God who had not turned away his prayer, Ps. lvi. 16, 20.

(7.) Peter sent the account to others of his friends: *Go, show these things to James, and to the brethren with him*, who perhaps were met together in another place at the same time, upon the same errand to the throne of grace, which is one way of keeping up the communion of saints and wrestling with God in prayer—acting in concert, though at a distance, like Esther and Mordecai. He would have James and his company to know of his deliverance, not only that they might be eased of their pain and delivered from their fears concerning Peter, but that they might return thanks to God with him

and for him. Observe, Though Herod had slain one James with the sword, yet here was another James, and that in Jerusalem too, that stood up in his room to preside among the brethren there; for, when God has work to do, he will never want instruments to do it with.

(8.) Peter had nothing more to do for the present than to shift for his own safety, which he did accordingly: *He departed, and went into another place more obscure*, and therefore more safe. He knew the town very well, and knew where to find a place that would be a shelter to him. Note, Even the Christian law of self-denial and suffering for Christ has not abrogated and repealed the natural law of self-preservation, and care for our own safety, as far as God gives an opportunity of providing for it by lawful means.

V. Having seen the triumph of Peter's friends in his deliverance, let us next observe the confusion of his enemies thereupon, which was so much the greater because people's expectation was so much raised of the putting of him to death. 1. The guards were in the utmost consternation upon it, for they knew how highly penal it was to them to let a prisoner escape that they had charge of (v. 18): *As soon as it was day*, and they found the prisoner gone, there was *no small stir or strife*, as some read it, *among the soldiers, what had become of Peter*; he is gone, and nobody knows how or which way. They thought themselves as sure as could be of him but last night; yet now the bird is flown, and they can hear no tale nor tidings of him. This set them together by the ears; one says, "It was your fault;" the other, "Nay, but it was yours;" having no other way to clear themselves, but by accusing one another. With us, if but a prisoner for debt escape, the sheriff must answer for the debt. Thus have the persecutors of the gospel of Christ been often filled with vexation to see its cause conquering, notwithstanding the opposition they have given to it. 2. Houses were searched in vain for the rescued prisoner (v. 19): *Herod sought for him, and found him not*. Who can find whom God hath hidden? Baruch and Jeremiah are safe, though searched for, because *the Lord has hidden them*, Jer. xxxvi. 26. In times of public danger, all believers have God for *their hiding-place*, which is such a secret, that there the ignorant world cannot find them; such a strength, that the impotent world cannot reach them. 3. The keepers were reckoned with for a permissive escape: *Herod examined the keepers, and finding that they could give no satisfactory account how Peter got away, he commanded that they should be put to death*, according to the Roman law, and that 1 Kings xx. 39, *If by any means he be missing, then shall thy life go for his life*. It is probable that these keepers had been more severe with Peter than they needed to be (as the jailor, ch. xvi. 24), and had been abusive to him, and to others that had been



their prisoners upon the like account; and now justly are they put to death for that which was not their fault, and by him too that had set them to work to *vex the church*. When the wicked are thus snared in the work of their own hands, the Lord is known by the judgments which he executes. Or, if they had not thus made themselves obnoxious to the justice of God, and it be thought hard that innocent men should suffer thus for that which was purely the act of God, we may easily admit the conjectures of some, that though they were *commanded to be put to death*, to please the Jews, who were sadly disappointed by Peter's escape, yet they were not executed; but Herod's death, immediately after, prevented it. 4. Herod himself retired upon it: *He went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode*. He was vexed to the heart, as a lion disappointed of his prey; and the more because he had so much raised the *expectation of the people of the Jews* concerning Peter, had told them how he would very shortly gratify them with the sight of Peter's head in a charger, which would oblige them as much as John Baptist's did Herodias; it made him ashamed to be robbed of this boasting, and to see himself, notwithstanding his confidence, disabled to make his words good. This is such a mortification to his proud spirit that he cannot bear to stay in Judea, but away he goes to Cesarea. Josephus mentions this coming of Herod to Cesarea, at the end of the third year of his reign over all Judea (*Antiquit. xix. 7*), and says, he came thither to solemnize the plays that were kept there, by a vast concourse of the nobility and gentry of the kingdom, for the health of Cæsar, and in honour of him.

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. 21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 And the people gave a shout, saying, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man*. 23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. 24 But the word of God grew and multiplied. 25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

In these verses we have,

I. The death of Herod. God reckoned with him, not only for his putting James to death, but for his design and endeavour to put Peter to death; for sinners will be called to an account, not only for the wickedness of their deeds, but for the wickedness of their endeavours (Ps. xxviii. 4), for the mischief they have done and the mischief they would have done. It was but a little while that Herod lived after this. Some sinners God makes quick work with. Observe,

1. How the measure of his iniquity was filled up: it was *pride* that did it; it is this that commonly goes more immediately *before destruction*, and a *haughty spirit before a fall*. Nebuchadnezzar had been a very bloody man, and a great persecutor; but the word that was in the king's mouth when the judgments of God fell upon him was a proud word: *Is not this great Babylon that I have built?* Dan. iv. 30, 31. It is the glory of God to *look on every one that is proud, and bring him low*, Job xl. 12. The instance of it here is very remarkable, and shows how God *resists the proud*.

(1.) The men of Tyre and Sidon had, it seems, offended Herod. Those cities were now under the Roman yoke, and they had been guilty of some misdemeanours which Herod highly resented, and was resolved they should feel his resentment. Some very small matter would serve such a proud imperious man as Herod was for a provocation, where he was disposed to pick a quarrel. He was highly displeased with this people, and they must be made to know that his wrath was as *the roaring of a lion, as messengers of death*.

(2.) The offenders truckled, being convinced, if not that they had done amiss, yet that it was in vain to contend with such a potent adversary, who, right or wrong, would be too hard for them; they submitted and were willing upon any terms to *make peace with him*. Observe, [1.] The reason why they were desirous to have the matter accommodated: *Because their country was nourished by the king's country*. Tyre and Sidon were trading cities, and had little land belonging to them, but were always supplied with corn from the land of Canaan; *Judah and Israel traded in their market, with wheat, and honey, and oil*, Ezek. xxvii. 17. Now if Herod should make a law to prohibit the exportation of corn to Tyre and Sidon (which they knew not but a man so revengeful as he might soon do, not caring how many were famished by it), their country would be undone; so that it was their interest to keep in with him. And is it not then our wisdom to make our peace with God, and humble ourselves before him, who have a much more constant and necessary dependence upon him than one country can have upon another? *for in him we live, and move, and have our being*. [2.] The method they took to prevent a rupture: *They made Blastus the king's*



*chamberlain their friend*, probably with bribes and good presents; that is usually the way for men to make courtiers their friends. And it is the hard fate of princes that they must have not only their affairs, but their affections too, governed by such mercenary tools; yet such men as Herod, that will not be governed by reason, had better be so governed than by pride and passion. Blastus had Herod's ear, and has the art of mollifying his resentments; and a time is fixed for the ambassadors of Tyre and Sidon to come and make a public submission, to beg his majesty's pardon, throw themselves upon his clemency, and promise never again to offend in the like manner; and that which will thus feed his pride shall serve to cool his passion.

(3.) Herod appeared in all the pomp and grandeur he had: He was *arrayed in his royal apparel* (v. 21), and *sat upon his throne*. Josephus gives an account of this splendid appearance which Herod made upon this occasion.—*Antiquit.* lib. xix. cap. 7. He says that Herod at this time wore a robe of cloth of silver, so richly woven, and framed with such art, that when the sun shone it reflected the light with such a lustre as dazzled the eyes of the spectators, and struck an awe upon them. Foolish people value men by their outward appearance; and no better are those who value themselves by the esteem of such, who court it, and recommend themselves to it as Herod did, who thought to make up the want of a royal heart with his *royal apparel*; and *sat upon his throne*, as if that gave him a privilege to trample upon all about him as his footstool.

(4.) He made a speech to the men of Tyre and Sidon, a fine oration, in which, probably, after he had aggravated their fault, and commended their submission, he concluded with an assurance that he would pass by their offence and receive them into his favour again—proud enough that he had it in his power *whom he would to keep alive*, as well as *whom he would to slay*; and probably he kept them in suspense as to what their doom should be, till he made this oration to them, that the act of grace might come to them with the more pleasing surprise.

(5.) The people applauded him, the people that had a dependence upon him, and had benefited by his favour, they *gave a shout*; and this was what they shouted, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man*, v. 22. God is great and good, and they thought such was Herod's greatness in his apparel and throne, and such his goodness in forgiving them, that he was worthy to be called no less than a god; and perhaps his speech was delivered with such an air of majesty, and a mixture of clemency with it, as affected the auditors thus. Or, it may be, it was not from any real impression made upon their minds, or any high or good thoughts they had indeed conceived of him; but, how meanly soever they thought of him, they were resolved thus to curry

favour with him, and strengthen the new-made peace between him and them. Thus great men are made an easy prey to flatterers if they lend an ear to them, and encourage them. Grotius here observes that, though magistrates are called *gods* (Ps. lxxxii. 1), yet *kings or monarchs, that is, single persons, are not, lest countenance should thereby be given to the Gentiles, who gave divine honours to their kings alive and dead, as here; but they are a college of senators, or a bench of judges, that are called gods.*—*In collegio toto senatorum non idem erat periculi; itaque eos, non autem reges, invenimus dictos elohim.* Those that live by sense vilify God, as if he were altogether such a one as themselves, and deify men, as if they were gods; having their persons in admiration, because of advantage. This is not only a great affront to God, giving that glory to others which is due to him alone, but a great injury to those who are thus flattered, as it makes them forget themselves, and so puffs them up with pride that they are in the utmost danger possible of falling into the condemnation of the devil.

(6.) These undue praises he took to himself, pleased himself with them, and prided himself in them; and this was his sin. We do not find that he had given any private orders to his confidants to begin such a shout, or to put those words into the mouths of the people, nor that he returned them thanks for the compliment and undertook to answer their opinion of him. But his fault was that he said nothing, did not rebuke their flattery, nor disown the title they had given him, nor *give God the glory* (v. 23); but he took it to himself, was very willing it should terminate in himself, and that he should be thought a god and have divine honours paid him. *Si populus vult decipi, decipiat.*—*If the people will be deceived, let them.* And it was worse in him who was a Jew, and professed to believe in one God only, than it was in the heathen emperors, who had gods many and lords many.

2. How his iniquity was punished: *Immediately* (v. 23) *the angel of the Lord smote him* (by the order of Christ, for to him all judgment is committed), *because he gave not God the glory* (for God is jealous for his own honour, and will be glorified upon those whom he is not glorified by); and *he was eaten of worms above ground, and gave up the ghost*. Now he was reckoned with for vexing the church of Christ, killing James, imprisoning Peter, and all the other mischiefs he had done. Observe in the destruction of Herod,

(1.) It was no less than an angel that was the agent—the *angel of the Lord*, that angel that was ordered and commissioned to do it, or that angel that used to be employed in works of this nature, the destroying angel: or *the angel*, that is, that angel that delivered Peter in the former part of the chapter—that angel smote Herod. For those ministering spirits are the ministers either of divine jus-

tice or of divine mercy, as God is pleased to employ them. The angel smote him with a sore disease just at that instant when he was strutting at the applauses of the people, and adoring his own shadow. Thus the king of Tyre said in his pride, *I am a god; I sit in the seat of God; and set his heart as the heart of God*; but he shall be a man, and no God, a weak mortal man, *in the hand of him that slayeth him* (Ezek. xxviii. 2—9), so Herod here. Potent princes must know, not only that God is omnipotent, but that angels too are greater in power and might than they. The angel smote him, because he gave not the glory to God; angels are jealous for God's honour, and as soon as ever they have commission are ready to smite those that usurp his prerogatives, and rob God of his honour.

(2.) It was no more than a worm that was the instrument of Herod's destruction: He was eaten of worms, *γενόμενος σκωληκόβρωτος—he became worm-eaten*, so it must be read; rotten he was, and he became like a piece of rotten wood. The body in the grave is destroyed by worms, but Herod's body putrefied while he was yet alive, and bred the worms which began to feed upon it betimes; so Antiochus, that great persecutor, died. See here, [1.] What vile bodies those are which we carry about with us; they carry about with them the seeds of their own dissolution, by which they will soon be destroyed whenever God does but speak the word. Surprising discoveries have of late been made by microscopes of the multitude of worms that there are in human bodies, and how much they contribute to the diseases of them, which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our bodies, or of any of their accomplishments, and why we should not pamper our bodies, for this is but feeding the worms, and feeding them for the worms. [2.] See what weak and contemptible creatures God can make the instruments of his justice, when he pleases. Pharaoh is plagued with lice and flies, Ephraim consumed as with a moth, and Herod eaten with worms. [3.] See how God delights not only to bring down proud men, but to bring them down in such a way as is most mortifying, and pours most contempt upon them. Herod is not only destroyed, but destroyed by worms, that the pride of his glory may be effectually stained. This story of the death of Herod is particularly related by Josephus, a Jew, *Antiquit. lib. xix. cap. 7*, thus: "That Herod came down to Cesarea, to celebrate a festival in honour of Cæsar; that the second day of the festival he went in the morning to the theatre, clothed with that splendid robe mentioned before; that his flatterers saluted him as a god, begged that he would be propitious to them; that hitherto they had revered him as a man, but now they would confess to be in him something more excellent than a mortal nature. That he did not

refuse nor correct this impious flattery (so the historian expresses it); but, presently after, looking up, he saw an owl perched over his head, and was at the same instant seized with a most violent pain in his bowels, and gripes in his belly, which were exquisite from the very first; that he turned his eyes upon his friends, and said to this purpose: 'Now I, whom you called a god, and therefore immortal, must be proved a man, and mortal.' That his torture continued without intermission, or the least abatement, and then he died in the fifty-fourth year of his age, when he had been king seven years."

II. The progress of the gospel after this.

1. *The word of God grew and multiplied*, as seed sown, which comes up with a great increase, thirty, sixty, a hundred fold; wherever the gospel was preached, multitudes embraced it, and were added to the church by it, v. 24. After the death of James, the word of God grew; for the church, the more it was afflicted, the more it multiplied, like Israel in Egypt. The courage and comfort of the martyrs, and God's owning them, did more to invite people to Christianity, than their sufferings did to deter them from it. After the death of Herod the word of God gained ground. When such a persecutor was taken off by a dreadful judgment, many were thereby convinced that the cause of Christianity was doubtless the cause of Christ, and therefore embraced it. 2. Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch as soon as they had despatched the business they were sent upon: *When they had fulfilled their ministry*, had paid in their money to the proper persons, and taken care about the due distribution of it to those for whom it was collected, they returned from Jerusalem. Though they had a great many friends there, yet at present their work lay at Antioch; and where our business is there we should be, and no longer from it than is requisite. When a minister is called abroad upon any service, when he has fulfilled that ministry, he ought to remember that he has work to do at home, which wants him there and calls him thither. Barnabas and Saul, when they went to Antioch, took with them John, whose surname was Mark, at whose mother's house they had that meeting for prayer which we read of v. 12. She was sister to Barnabas. It is probable that Barnabas lodged there, and perhaps Paul with him, while they were at Jerusalem, and it was that that occasioned the meeting there at that time (for wherever Paul was he would have some good work doing), and their intimacy in that family while they were at Jerusalem occasioned their taking a son of that family with them when they returned, to be trained up under them, and employed by them, in the service of the gospel. Educating young men for the ministry, and entering them into it, is a very good work for elder ministers to take care of, and of good service to the rising generation.



## CHAP. XIII.

We have not yet met with any thing concerning the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles which bears any proportion to the largeness of that commission, "Go, and disciple all nations." The door was opened in the baptizing of Cornelius and his friends; but since then we had the gospel preached to the Jews only, ch. xi. 19. It should seem as if the light which began to shine upon the Gentile world had withdrawn itself. But here in this chapter that work, that great good work, is revived in the midst of the years; and though the Jews shall still have the first offer of the gospel made to them, yet, upon their refusal, the Gentiles shall have their share of the offer of it. Here is, I. The solemn ordination of Barnabas and Saul, by divine direction, to the ministry, to the great work of spreading the gospel among the nations about (and it is probable that other apostles or apostolical men dispersed themselves by order from Christ, upon the same errand, ver. 1—3). II. Their preaching the gospel in Cyprus, and the opposition they met with there from Elymas the sorcerer, ver. 4—13. III. The heads of a sermon which Paul preached to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, in their synagogue, which is given us as a specimen of what they usually preached to the Jews, and the method they took with them, ver. 14—41. IV. The preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles at their request, and upon the Jews' refusal of it, wherein the apostles justified themselves against the displeasure which the Jews conceived at it, and God owned them, ver. 42—49. V. The trouble which the infidel Jews gave to the apostles, which obliged them to remove to another place (ver. 50—52), so that the design of this chapter is to show how cautiously, how gradually, and with what good reason the apostles carried the gospel into the Gentile world, and admitted the Gentiles into the church, which was so great an offence to the Jews, and which Paul is so industrious to justify in his epistles

**N**OW there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

We have here a divine warrant and commission to Barnabas and Saul to go and preach the gospel among the Gentiles, and their ordination to that service by the imposition of hands, with fasting and prayer.

I. Here is an account of the present state of the church at Antioch, which was planted *ch. xi. 20.*

1. How well furnished it was with good ministers; there were there *certain prophets and teachers* (v. 1), men that were eminent for gifts, graces, and usefulness. Christ, when he *ascended on high*, gave some *prophets and some teachers* (Eph. iv. 11); these were both. Agabus seems to have been a prophet and not a teacher, and many were teachers who were not prophets; but those here mentioned were at times divinely inspired, and had instructions immediately from heaven upon special occasions, which gave them the title of prophets; and withal they were stated teachers of the church in their religious assemblies, expounded the scriptures, and opened the doctrine of Christ with suitable applications. These were the prophets, and scribes, or teachers, which Christ promised to send (Matt. xxiii. 34), such as were every way qualified for the service of the Christian church. Antioch was a great

city, and the Christians there were many, so that they could not all meet in one place; it was therefore requisite they should have many teachers, to preside in their respective assemblies, and to deliver God's mind to them. Barnabas is first named, probably because he was the eldest, and Saul last, probably because he was the youngest; but afterwards the last became first, and Saul more eminent in the church. Three others are mentioned.

(1.) *Simeon*, or *Simon*, who for distinction-sake was called *Niger*, *Simon the Black*, from the colour of his hair; like him that with us was surnamed the Black Prince. (2.) *Lucius* of Cyrene, who some think (and Dr. Lightfoot inclines to it) was the same with this Luke that wrote the Acts, originally a Cyrenian, and educated in the Cyrenian college or synagogue at Jerusalem, and there first receiving the gospel. (3.) *Manaen*, a person of some quality, as it should seem, for he was *brought up with Herod the tetrarch*, either nursed of the same milk, or bred at the same school, or pupil to the same tutor, or rather one that was his constant colleague and companion—that in every part of his education was his comrade and intimate, which gave him a fair prospect of preferment at court, and yet for Christ's sake he quitted all the hopes of it; like Moses, who, *when he had come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*. Had he joined in with Herod, with whom he was brought up, he might have had Blastus's place, and have been his chamberlain; but it is better to be fellow-sufferer with a saint than fellow-persecutor with a tetrarch.

2. How well employed they were (v. 2): *They ministered to the Lord, and fasted*. Observe, (1.) Diligent faithful teachers do truly minister unto the Lord. Those that instruct Christians serve Christ; they really do him honour, and carry on the interest of his kingdom. Those that minister to the church in praying and preaching (both which are included here), *minister unto the Lord*, for they are the church's servants for Christ's sake; to him they must have an eye in their ministrations, and from him they shall have their recompence. (2.) Ministering to the Lord, in one way or other, ought to be the stated business of churches and their teachers; to this work time ought to be set apart, nay, it is set apart, and in this work we ought to spend some part of every day. What have we to do as Christians and ministers but to *serve the Lord Christ*? Col. iii. 24; Rom. xiv. 18. (3.) Religious *fasting* is of use in our ministering to the Lord, both as a sign of our humiliation and a means of our mortification. Though it was not so much practised by the disciples of Christ, *while the bridegroom was with them*, as it was by the disciples of John and of the Pharisees; yet, after the bridegroom was taken away, they abounded in it, as those that had well learned to deny themselves and to endure hardness



II. The orders given by the Holy Ghost for the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul, while they were engaged in public exercises, the ministers of the several congregations in the city joining in one solemn fast or day of prayer: *The Holy Ghost said*, either by a voice from heaven, or by a strong impulse on the minds of those of them that were prophets, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*. He does not specify the work, but refers to a former call of which they themselves knew the meaning, whether others did or no: as for Saul, he was particularly told that he must *bear Christ's name to the Gentiles* (ch. ix. 15), that *he must be sent to the Gentiles* (ch. xxii. 21); the matter was settled between them at Jerusalem before this, that as Peter, James, and John laid out themselves among those of the circumcision, so Paul and Barnabas should *go to the heathen*, Gal. ii. 7—9. Barnabas, it is likely, knew himself designed for this service as well as Paul. Yet they would not thrust themselves into this harvest, though it appeared plenteous, till they received their orders from the Lord of the harvest: *Thrust in thy sickle for the harvest is ripe*, Rev. xiv. 15. The orders were, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul*. Observe here, 1. Christ by his Spirit has the nomination of his ministers; for it is by the Spirit of Christ that they are qualified in some measure for his services, inclined to it, and taken off from other cares inconsistent with it. There are some whom the Holy Ghost has separated for the service of Christ, has distinguished from others as men that are offered and that willingly offer themselves to the temple service; and concerning them directions are given to those who are competent judges of the sufficiency of the abilities and the sincerity of the inclination: *Separate them*. 2. Christ's ministers are separated to him and to the Holy Ghost: *Separate them to me*; they are to be employed in Christ's work and under the Spirit's guidance, to the glory of God the Father. 3. All that are separated to Christ as his ministers are separated to work; Christ keeps no servants to be idle. *If any man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work*; that is what he is separated to, *to labour in the word and doctrine*. They are separated to take pains, not to take state. 4. The work of Christ's ministers, to which they are to be separated, is work that is already settled, and that which all Christ's ministers hitherto have been called to, and which they themselves have first been, by an external call, directed to and have chosen.

III. Their ordination, pursuant to these orders: not to the ministry in general (Barnabas and Saul had both of them been ministers long before this), but to a particular service in the ministry, which had something peculiar in it, and which required a fresh commission, which commission God saw fit at this time to transmit by the hands

of these prophets and teachers, for the giving of this direction to the church, that teachers should ordain teachers (for prophets we are not now any longer to expect), and that those who have the dispensing of the oracles of Christ committed to them should, for the benefit of posterity, *commit the same to faithful men, who shall be able also to teach others*, 2 Tim. ii. 2. So here, Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, faithful teachers at this time in the church of Antioch, *when they had fasted and prayed, laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul, and sent them away* (v. 3), according to the directions received. Observe, 1. They prayed for them. When good men are going forth about good work, they ought to be solemnly and particularly prayed for, especially by their brethren that are their fellow-labourers and fellow-soldiers. 2. They joined fasting with their prayers, as they did in their other ministrations, v. 3. Christ has taught us this by his abstaining from sleep (a night-fast, if I may so call it) the night before he sent forth his apostles, that he might spend it in prayer. 3. They laid their hands on them. Hereby, (1.) They gave them their manumission, dismissal, or discharge from the present service they were engaged in, in the church of Antioch, acknowledging that they went off not only fairly and with consent, but honourably and with a good report. (2.) They implored a blessing upon them in their present undertaking, begged that God would be with them, and give them success; and, in order to this, that *they might be filled with the Holy Ghost* in their work. This very thing is explained ch. xiv. 26, where it is said, concerning Paul and Barnabas, that from Antioch they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. As it was an instance of the humility of Barnabas and Saul that they submitted to the imposition of the hands of those that were their equals, or rather their inferiors; so it was of the good disposition of the other teachers that they did not envy Barnabas and Saul the honour to which they were preferred, but cheerfully committed it to them, with hearty prayers for them; and they sent them away with all expedition, out of a concern for those countries where they were to break up fallow ground.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. 6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: 7 Which was with the de-



puty of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. 9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, 10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. 13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

In these verses we have,

I. A general account of the coming of Barnabas and Saul to the famous island of Cyprus; and perhaps thitherward they steered their course because Barnabas was a native of that country (*ch.* iv. 36), and he was willing they should have the first-fruits of his labours, pursuant to his new commission. Observe, 1. Their being sent forth by the Holy Ghost was the great thing that encouraged them in this undertaking, *v.* 4. If the Holy Ghost send them forth, he will go along with them, strengthen them, carry them on in their work, and give them success; and then they fear no colours, but can cheerfully venture upon a stormy sea from Antioch, which was now to them a quiet harbour. 2. They came to Seleucia, the sea-port town opposite to Cyprus, thence crossed the sea to Cyprus, and in that island the first city they came to was Salamis, a city on the east side of the island (*v.* 5); and, when they had sown good seed there, *thence* they went onward *through the isle* (*v.* 6) till they came to Paphos, which lay on the western coast. 3. They preached the word of God wherever they came, *in the synagogues of the Jews*; so far were they from excluding them that they gave them the preference, and so left those among them who believed not inexcusable; *they would have gathered them, but they would*

*not*. They did not act clandestinely, nor preach the Messiah to others unknown to them, but laid their doctrine open to the censure of the rulers of their synagogues, who might, if they had any thing to say, object against it. Nor would they have acted separately, but in concert with them, if they had not driven them out from them, and from their synagogues. 4. *They had John for their minister*; not their servant in common things, but their assistant in the things of God, either to prepare their way in places where they designed to come or to carry on their work in places where they had begun it, or to converse familiarly with those to whom they preached publicly, and explain things to them; and such a one might be many ways of use to them, especially in a strange country.

II. A particular account of their encounter with *Elymas the sorcerer*, whom they met with at Paphos, where the governor resided; a place famous for a temple built to Venus there, thence called *Paphian Venus*; and therefore there was more than ordinary need that *the Son of God* should there be manifested to destroy the works of the devil.

1. There the deputy, a Gentile, *Sergius Paulus* by name, encouraged the apostles, and was willing to hear their message. He was governor of the country, under the Roman emperor; proconsul or proprætor, such a one as we should call *lord lieutenant of the island*. He had the character of a prudent man, an intelligent, considerate man, that was ruled by reason, not passion nor prejudice, which appeared by this, that, having a character of Barnabas and Saul, he sent for them, and desired to hear the word of God. Note, When that which we hear has a tendency to lead us to God, it is prudence to desire to hear more of it. Those are wise people, however they may be ranked among the foolish of this world, who are inquisitive after the mind and will of God. Though he was a great man, and a man in authority, and the preachers of the gospel were men that made no figure, yet, if they have a message from God, let him know what it is, and, if it appear to be so, he is ready to receive it.

2. There Elymas, a Jew, a sorcerer, opposed them, and did all he could to obstruct their progress. This justified the apostles in turning to the Gentiles, that this Jew was so malignant against them.

(1.) This Elymas was a pretender to the gift of prophecy, a sorcerer, a false-prophet—one that would be taken for a divine, because he was skilled in the arts of divination; he was a conjurer, and took on him to tell people their fortune, and to discover things lost, and probably was in league with the devil for this purpose; *his name was Barjesus—the son of Joshua*; it signifies the son of salvation; but the Syriac calls him, *Barshoma—the son of pride*; *filius inflationis—the son of inflation*.

(2.) He was hanging on at court, *was with the deputy* of the country. It does not appear that the deputy called for him, as he did for Barnabas and Saul; but he thrust himself upon him, aiming, no doubt, to make a hand of him, and get money by him.

(3.) He made it his business to withstand Barnabas and Saul, as the magicians of Egypt, in Pharaoh's court, *withstood* Moses and Aaron, 2 Tim. iii. 8. He set up himself to be a messenger from heaven, and denied that they were. And *thus he sought to turn away the deputy from the faith* (v. 8), to keep him from receiving the gospel, which he saw him inclined to do. Note, Satan is in a special manner busy with great men and men of power, to keep them from being religious; because he knows that their example, whether good or bad, will have an influence upon many. And those who are in any way instrumental to prejudice people against the truths and ways of Christ are doing the devil's work.

(4.) Saul (who is here for the first time called Paul) fell upon him for this with a holy indignation. *Saul, who is also called Paul*, v. 9. Saul was his name as he was a Hebrew, and of the tribe of Benjamin; Paul was his name as he was a citizen of Rome. Hitherto we have had him mostly conversant among the Jews, and therefore called by his Jewish name; but now, when he is sent forth among the Gentiles, he is called by his Roman name, to put somewhat of a reputation upon him in the Roman cities, Paulus being a very common name among them. But some think he was never called Paul till now that he was instrumental in the conversion of Sergius Paulus to the faith of Christ, and that he took the name Paulus as a memorial of this victory obtained by the gospel of Christ, as among the Romans he that had conquered a country took his denomination from it, as *Germanicus, Britannicus, Africanus*; or rather, Sergius Paulus himself gave him the name Paulus in token of his favour and respect to him, as Vespasian gave his name Flavius to Josephus the Jew. Now of Paul it is said,

[1.] That he was *filled with the Holy Ghost* upon this occasion, filled with a holy zeal against a professed enemy of Christ, which was one of the graces of the Holy Ghost—a *spirit of burning*: filled with power to denounce the wrath of God against him, which was one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost—a *spirit of judgment*. He felt a more than ordinary fervour in his mind, as the prophet did when he was *full of power by the Spirit of the Lord* (Mic. iii. 8), and another prophet when *his face was made harder than flint* (Ezek. iii. 9), and another when *his mouth was made like a sharp sword*, Isa. xlix. 2. What Paul said did not come from any personal resentment, but from the strong impressions which the Holy Ghost made upon his spirit.

[2.] He *set his eyes upon him*, to face him down, and to show a holy boldness, in opposition to his wicked impudence. He set his eyes upon him, as an indication that the eye of the heart-searching God was upon him, and saw through and through him; nay, *that the face of the Lord was against him*, Ps. xxxiv. 16. He fixed his eyes upon him, to see if he could discern in his countenance any marks of remorse for what he had done; for, if he could have discerned the least sign of this, it would have prevented the ensuing doom.

[3.] He gave him his true character, not in passion, but by the Holy Ghost, who knows men better than they know themselves, v. 10. He describes him to be, *First*, An agent for hell; and such there have been upon this earth (the seat of the war between *the seed of the woman and of the serpent*) ever since Cain *who was of that wicked one*, an incarnate devil, *slew his brother*, for no other reason than because *his own works were evil and his brother's righteous*. This Elymas, though called *Bar-jesus—a son of Jesus*, was really a *child of the devil*, bore his image, did his lusts, and served his interests, John viii. 44. In two things he resembled the devil as a child does his father:—1. In craftiness. *The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field* (Gen. iii. 1), and Elymas, though void of all wisdom, was *full of all subtlety*, expert in all the arts of deceiving men and imposing upon them. 2. In malice. He was *full of all mischief*—a spiteful ill-conditioned man, and a sworn implacable enemy to God and goodness. Note, A fulness of subtlety and mischief together make a man indeed a child of the devil. *Secondly*, An adversary to heaven. If he be a child of the devil, it follows of course that he is *an enemy to all righteousness*, for the devil is so. Note, Those that are enemies to the doctrine of Christ are enemies to all righteousness, for in it all righteousness is summed up and fulfilled.

[4.] He charged upon him his present crime, and expostulated with him upon it: "*Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord*, to misrepresent them, to put false colours upon them, and so to discourage people from entering into them, and walking in them?" Note, *First*, The ways of the Lord are right: they are all so, they are perfectly so. The ways of the Lord Jesus are right, the only right ways to heaven and happiness. *Secondly*, There are those who pervert these right ways, who not only wander out of these ways themselves (as Elihu's penitent, who owns, *I have perverted that which was right, and it profited me not*), but mislead others, and suggest to them unjust prejudices against these ways: as if the doctrine of Christ were uncertain and precarious, the laws of Christ unreasonable and impracticable, and the service of Christ unpleasant and unprofitable, which is an unjust perverting of the right



ways of the Lord, and making them seem crooked ways. *Thirdly*, Those who pervert the right ways of the Lord are commonly so hardened in it that, though the equity of those ways be set before them by the most powerful and commanding evidence, yet they will not cease to do it. *Etsi suaseris, non persuaseris*—You may advise, but you will never persuade; they will have it their own way; they have loved strangers, and after them they will go.

[5.] He denounced the judgment of God upon him, in a present blindness (v. 11): "*And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, a righteous hand. God is now about to lay hands on thee, and make thee his prisoner, for thou art taken in arms against him; thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.*" This was designed both for the proof of his crime, as it was a miracle wrought to confirm the right ways of the Lord, and consequently to show the wickedness of him who would not cease to pervert them, as also for the punishment of his crime. It was a suitable punishment; he shut his eyes, the eyes of his mind, against the light of the gospel, and therefore justly were the eyes of his body shut against the light of the sun; he sought to blind the deputy (as an agent for the god of this world, who blindeth the minds of those that believe not, lest the light of the gospel should shine unto them, 2 Cor. iv. 4), and therefore is himself struck blind. Yet it was a moderate punishment: he was only struck blind, when he might most justly have been struck dead; and it was only for a season; if he will repent, and give glory to God, by making confession, his sight shall be restored; nay, it should seem, though he do not, yet his sight shall be restored, to try if he will be led to repentance either by the judgments of God or by his mercies.

[6.] This judgment was immediately executed: *There fell on him a mist and a darkness*, as on the Sodomites when they persecuted Lot, and on the Syrians when they persecuted Elisha. This silenced him presently, filled him with confusion, and was an effectual confutation of all he said against the doctrine of Christ. Let not him any more pretend to be a guide to the deputy's conscience who is himself struck blind. It was also an earnest to him of a much sorer punishment if he repent not; for he is one of those wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, Jude 13. Elymas did himself proclaim the truth of the miracle, when he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand; and where now is all his skill in sorcery, upon which he had so much valued himself, when he can neither find his way himself nor find a friend that will be so kind as to lead him!

3. Notwithstanding all the endeavours of Elymas to turn away the deputy from the faith, he was brought to believe, and this

miracle, wrought upon the magician himself (like the boils of Egypt, which were upon the magicians, so that they could not stand before Moses, Exod. ix. 11), contributed to it. The deputy was a very sensible man, and observed something uncommon, and which intimated its divine original, (1.) In Paul's preaching he was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord, the Lord Christ,—the doctrine that is from him, the discoveries he has made of the Father,—the doctrine that is concerning him, his person, natures, offices, undertaking. Note, The doctrine of Christ has a great deal in it that is astonishing; and the more we know of it the more reason we shall see to wonder and stand amazed at it. (2.) In this miracle: *When he saw what was done*, and how much Paul's power transcended that of the magician, and how plainly Elymas was baffled and confounded, he believed. It is not said that he was baptized, and so made a complete convert, but it is probable that he was. Paul would not do his business by the halves; as for God, his work is perfect. When he became a Christian, he neither laid down his government, nor was turned out of it, but we may suppose, as a Christian magistrate, by his influence helped very much to propagate Christianity in that island. The tradition of the Romish church, which has taken care to find bishoprics for all the eminent converts we read of in the Acts, has made this Sergius Paulus bishop of Narbon in France, left there by Paul in his journey to Spain.

III. Their departure from the island of Cyprus. It is probable that they did a great deal more there than is recorded, where an account is given only of that which was extraordinary—the conversion of the deputy. When they had done what they had to do, 1. They quitted the country, and went to Parga. Those that went were Paul and his company, which, it is probable, was increased in Cyprus, many being desirous to accompany him. *Ἀναχθέντες οἱ περὶ τὸν Παῦλον*—Those that were about Paul loosed from Paphos, which supposes that he went too; but such an affection had his new friends for him that they were always about him, and by their good will would be never from him. 2. Then John Mark quitted them, and returned to Jerusalem, without the consent of Paul and Barnabas; either he did not like the work, or he wanted to go and see his mother. It was his fault, and we shall hear of it again.

14 But when they departed from Parga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. 15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any

word of exhortation for the people, say on. 16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. 17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it. 18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. 19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. 20 And after that he gave *unto them* judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. 23 Of this man's seed hath God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: 23 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose. 26 Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. 27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*. 28 And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid

*him* in a sepulchre. 30 But God raised him from the dead: 31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. 34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. 35 Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. 38 Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; 41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

Perga in Pamphylia was a noted place, especially for a temple there erected to the goddess Diana, yet nothing at all is related of what Paul and Barnabas did there, only that *thither they came* (v. 13), and *thence they departed*, v. 14. But the history of the apostles' travels, as that of Christ's, passes by many things worthy to have been recorded, because, *if all had been written, the world could not have contained the books*. But the next place we find them in is another Antioch, said to be in Pisidia, to distinguish it from that Antioch in Syria from which they were sent out. Pisidia was a province of the Lesser Asia, bordering upon Pamphylia; this Antioch, it is likely, was the metropolis of it. Abundance of Jews lived



there, and to them *the gospel was to be first preached*; and Paul's sermon to them is what we have in these verses, which, it is likely, is the substance of what was preached by the apostles generally to the Jews in all places; for in dealing with them the proper way was to show them how the New Testament, which they would have them to receive, exactly agreed with the Old Testament, which they not only received, but were zealous for. We have here,

I. The appearance which Paul and Barnabas made in a religious assembly of the Jews at Antioch, *v.* 14. Though they had lately had such good success with a Roman deputy, yet, *when they came to Antioch*, they did not enquire for the chief magistrate, nor make their court to him, but they applied to the Jews, which is a further proof of their good affection to them and their desire of their welfare. 1. They observed their time of worship, *on the sabbath day*, the Jewish sabbath. *The first day of the week* they observed among themselves as a Christian sabbath; but, if they will meet the Jews, it must be on the seventh-day sabbath, which therefore, upon such occasions, they did as yet sometimes observe. For, though it was by the death of Christ that the ceremonial law died, yet it was in the ruins of Jerusalem that it was to be buried; and therefore, though the morality of the fourth commandment was entirely transferred to the Christian sabbath, yet it was not incongruous to join with the Jews in their sabbath sanctification. 2. They met them in their place of worship, *in the synagogue*. Note, Sabbath days should be kept holy in solemn assemblies; they are instituted chiefly for public worship. *The sabbath day is a holy convocation*, and for that reason *no servile work must be done therein*. Paul and Barnabas were strangers; but, wherever we come, we must enquire out God's faithful worshippers, and join with them (as these apostles here did), as those that desire to keep up a communion with all saints; though they were strangers, yet they were admitted into the synagogue, and to sit down there. Care should be taken in places of public worship that strangers be accommodated, even the poorest; for, of those of whom we know nothing else, we know this, that they have precious souls, for which our charity binds us to be concerned.

II. The invitation given them to preach. 1. The usual service of the synagogue was performed (*v.* 15): *The law and the prophets were read*, a portion of each, the lessons for the day. Note, When we come together to worship God, we must do it not only by prayer and praise, but by the reading and hearing of the word of God; hereby we *give him the glory due to his name*, as our Lord and Lawgiver. 2. When that was done, they were asked by *the rulers of the synagogue* to give them a sermon (*v.* 15): They sent a

messenger to them with the respectful message, *Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on*. It is probable that the rulers of the synagogue had met with them, and been in private conversation with them before; and, if they had not an affection to the gospel, yet they had at least the curiosity to hear Paul preach; and therefore not only gave him permission, but begged the favour of him that he would speak *a word of exhortation to the people*.

Note, (1.) The bare reading of the scriptures in the public assemblies is not sufficient, but they should be expounded, and the people exhorted out of them. This is spreading the net, and assisting people in doing that which is necessary to the making of the word profitable to them—that is, the applying of it to themselves. (2.) Those that preside, and have power, in public assemblies, should provide for a word of exhortation to the people, whenever they come together. (3.) Sometimes a word of exhortation from a strange minister may be of great use to the people, provided he be well approved. It is likely Paul did *often preach in the synagogue*, when he was not thus invited to it by the rulers of the synagogues; for he often preached *with much contention*, 1 Thess. ii. 2. But these were more noble, more generous, than the rulers of the synagogues generally were.

III. The sermon Paul preached in the synagogue of the Jews, at the invitation of the rulers of the synagogue. He gladly embraced the opportunity given him to preach Christ to his countrymen the Jews. He did not object to them that he was a stranger, and that it was none of his business; nor object to himself, that he might get ill-will by preaching Christ among the Jews; but *stood up*, as one prepared and determined to speak, *and beckoned with his hand*, to excite and prepare them to hear. He waved his hand as an orator, not only desiring silence and attention, but endeavouring to move affection, and to show himself in earnest. Perhaps, upon the moving of them *to give an exhortation to the people*, there were those in the synagogue that were ready to mutiny against the rulers, and opposed the toleration of Paul's preaching, and that occasioned some tumult and commotion, which Paul endeavoured to quiet by that decent motion of his hand; as also by his modest desire of a patient impartial hearing: "*Men of Israel, that are Jews by birth, and you that fear God, that are proselyted to the Jewish religion, give audience*; let me beg your attention a little, for I have something to say to you which concerns your everlasting peace, and would not say it in vain." Now this excellent sermon is recorded, to show that those who preached the gospel to the Gentiles did it not till they had first used their utmost endeavours with the Jews, to persuade them to come in and take the benefit of it; and that

they had no prejudice at all against the Jewish nation, nor any desire that they should perish, but rather that they should turn and live. Every thing is touched in this sermon that might be proper either to convince the judgment or insinuate into the affections of the Jews, to prevail with them to receive and embrace Christ as the promised Messiah.

1. He owns them to be God's favourite people, whom he had taken into special relation to himself, and for whom he had done great things. Probably the Jews of the dispersion, that lived in other countries, being more in danger of mingling with the nations, were more jealous of their peculiarity than those that lived in their own land were; and therefore Paul is here very careful to take notice of it, to their honour.

(1.) That the God of the whole earth was, in a particular manner, the God of this people Israel, a God in covenant with them, and that he had given them a revelation of his mind and will, such as he had not given to any other nation or people; so that hereby they were distinguished from, and dignified above, all their neighbours, having peculiar precepts to be governed by, and peculiar promises to depend upon.

(2.) That he had chosen their fathers to be his friends: Abraham was called the friend of God; to be his prophets, by whom he would reveal his mind to his church, and to be the trustees of his covenant with the church. He puts them in mind of this, to let them know that the reason why God favoured them, though undeserving, and ill deserving, was because he would adhere to the choice he had made of their fathers, Deut. vii. 7, 8. They were beloved purely for the fathers' sakes, Rom. xi. 28.

(3.) That he had exalted that people, and put a great deal of honour upon them, had advanced them into a people, and raised them from nothing, when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and had nothing in them to recommend them to the divine favour. They ought to remember this, and to infer hence that God was no debtor to them; for it was *ex mero motu*—out of his mere good pleasure, and not upon a valuable consideration, that they had the grant of the divine favour; and therefore it was revocable at pleasure; and God did them no wrong if he at length plucked up the hedge of their peculiarity. But they were debtors to him, and obliged to receive such further discoveries as he should make of his will, and to admit such further additions as he should make to his church.

(4.) That he had with a high hand brought them out of Egypt, where they were not only strangers, but captives, had delivered them at the expense of a great many miracles, both of mercy to them and judgment on their oppressors (signs and wonders, Deut. iv. 34), and at the expense of a great many lives, all the first-born of Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his host, in the Red Sea; I gave

Egypt for thy ransom, gave men for thee. Isa. xliii. 3, 4.

(5.) That he had suffered their manners forty years in the wilderness, v. 18 Ἐτροποφόρησεν. Some think it should be read, ἐτροποφόρησεν—he educated them, because this is the word the Septuagint use concerning the fatherly care God took of that people, Deut. i. 31. Both may be included; for, [1.] God made a great deal of provision for them for forty years in the wilderness: miracles were their daily bread, and kept them from starving: They lacked not any thing. [2.] He exercised a great deal of patience with them. They were a provoking, murmuring, unbelieving people; and yet he bore with them, did not deal with them as they deserved, but suffered his anger many a time to be turned away by the prayer and intercession of Moses. So many years as we have each of us lived in this world, we must own that God has thus been as a tender father to us, has supplied our wants, has fed us all our life long unto this day, has been indulgent to us, a God of pardons (as he was to Israel, Neh. ix. 17), and not extreme to mark what we have done amiss; we have tried his patience, and yet not tired it. Let not the Jews insist too much upon the privileges of their peculiarity, for they have forfeited them a thousand times.

(6.) That he had put them in possession of the land of Canaan (v. 19): When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, that were doomed to be rooted out to make room for them, he divided their land to them by lot, and put them in possession of it. This was a signal favour of God to them, and he owns that hereby a great honour was put upon them, from which he would not in the least derogate.

(7.) That he had raised up men, inspired from heaven, to deliver them out of the hands of those that invaded their rights, and oppressed them after their settlement in Canaan, v. 20, 21. [1.] He gave them judges, men qualified for public service, and, by an immediate impulse upon their spirits, called to it, *pro re nata*—as the occasion required. Though they were a provoking people, and were never in servitude but their sin brought them to it, yet upon their petition a deliverer was raised up. The critics find some difficulty in computing these four hundred and fifty years. From the deliverance out of Egypt to David's expulsion of the Jebusites from the stronghold of Zion, which completed the casting out of the heathen nations, was four hundred and fifty years; and most of that time they were under judges. Others thus: The government of the judges, from the death of Joshua to the death of Eli, was just three hundred and thirty-nine years, but it is said to be [ῥε] as it were four hundred and fifty years, because the years of their servitude to the several nations that oppressed them, though really they were included in the years of the judges, are yet mentioned in the history as



if they had been distinct from them. Now these, all put together, make *one hundred and eleven years*, which, added to the *three hundred and thirty nine*, make them *four hundred and fifty*: as so many, though not really so many. [2.] He governed them by a prophet, *Samuel*, a man divinely inspired to preside in their affairs. [3.] He afterwards at their request *set a king over them* (v. 21), *Saul, the son of Cis*. Samuel's government and his lasted *forty years*, which was a kind of transition from the theocracy to the kingly government. [4.] At last, he made David their king, v. 22. *When God had removed Saul, for his mal-administration, he raised up unto them David to be their king*, and made a covenant of royalty with him, and with his seed. When he had removed one king, he did not leave them as sheep without a shepherd, but soon raised up another, raised him up from a mean and low estate, *raised him up on high*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. He quotes the testimony God gave concerning him, *First*, That his choice was divine: *I have found David*, Ps. lxxxix. 20. God himself pitched upon him. Finding implies seeking; as if God had ransacked all the families of Israel to find a man fit for his purpose, and this was he. *Secondly*, That his character was divine: *A man after my own heart*, such a one as I would have, one on whom the image of God is stamped, and therefore one in whom God is well pleased and whom he approves. This character was given of him before he was first anointed, 1 Sam. xiii. 14. *The Lord hath sought out a man after his own heart*, such a one as he would have. *Thirdly*, That his conduct was divine, and under divine direction: *He shall fulfil all my will*. He shall desire and endeavour to do the will of God, and shall be enabled to do it, and employed in the doing of it, and go through with it. Now all this seems to show not only the special favour of God to the people of Israel (with the acknowledgment of which the apostle is very willing to oblige them) but the further favours of another nature which he designed them, and which were now, by the preaching of the gospel, offered to them. Their deliverance out of Egypt, and settlement in Canaan, were types and figures of good things to come. The changes of their government showed that it made nothing perfect, and therefore must give way to the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, which was now in the setting up, and which, if they would admit it and submit to it, would be the glory of their people Israel; and therefore they needed not conceive any jealousy at all of the preaching of the gospel, as if it tended in the least to damage the true excellences of the Jewish church.

2. He gives them a full account of our Lord Jesus, passing from David to the Son of David, and shows that this Jesus is his promised Seed (v. 23): *Of this man's seed, from that root of Jesse, from that man after*

*God's own heart, hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour—Jesus, who carries salvation in his name.*

(1.) How welcome should the preaching of the gospel of Christ be to the Jews, and how should they embrace it, as well worthy of all acceptance, when it brought them the tidings, [1.] Of a Saviour, to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, as the judges of old, who were therefore called saviours; but this a Saviour to do that for them which, it appears by the history, those could not do—to save them from their sins, their worst enemies. [2.] A Saviour of God's raising up, that has his commission from heaven. [3.] Raised up to be a Saviour unto Israel, to them in the first place: *He was sent to bless them*; so far was the gospel from designing the rejection of Israel, that it designed the gathering of them. [4.] Raised up of the seed of David, that ancient royal family, which the people of Israel gloried so much in, and which at this time, to the great disgrace of the whole nation, was buried in obscurity. It ought to be a great satisfaction to them that God had raised up this horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David, Luke i. 69. [5.] Raised up according to his promise, the promise to David (Ps. cxxxii. 11), the promise to the Old-Testament church in the latter times of it: *I will raise unto David a righteous branch*, Jer. xxiii. 5. This promise was it to which the twelve tribes hoped to come (ch. xxvi. 7); why then should they entertain it so coldly, now that it was brought to them? Now,

(2.) Concerning this Jesus, he tells them,

[1.] That John the Baptist was his harbinger and forerunner, that great man whom all acknowledged to be a prophet. Let them not say that the Messiah's coming was a surprise upon them, and that this might excuse them if they took time to consider whether they should entertain him or no; for they had sufficient warning by John, who preached before his coming, v. 24. Two things he did:—*First*, He made way for his entrance, by preaching the baptism of repentance, not to a few select disciples, but to all the people of Israel. He showed them their sins, warned them of the wrath to come, called them to repentance, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and bound those to this who were willing to be bound by the solemn rite or sign of baptism; and by this he made ready a people prepared for the Lord Jesus, to whom his grace would be acceptable when they were thus brought to know themselves. *Secondly*, He gave notice of his approach (v. 25): *As he fulfilled his course*, when he was going on vigorously in his work, and had had wonderful success in it, and an established interest: "Now," saith he to those that attended his ministry, "Whom think you that I am? What notions have you of me, what expectations from me? You may be thinking that I am the Messiah, whom you expect; but you are mistaken, I am not he (see John i. 20), but he

is at the door; *behold, there cometh one immediately after me, who will so far exceed me upon all accounts, that I am not worthy to be employed in the meanest office about him, no, not to help him on and off with his shoes—whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose, and you may guess who that must be.*"

[2.] That the rulers and people of the Jews, who should have welcomed him, and been his willing, forward, faithful subjects, were his persecutors and murderers. When the apostles preach Christ as the Saviour, they are so far from concealing his ignominious death, and drawing a veil over it, that they always *preach Christ crucified*, yea, and (though this added much to the reproach of his sufferings) crucified by his own people, by those that dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city—the royal city, and their rulers, *v. 27. First, Their sin was that though they found no cause of death in him, could not prove him, no, nor had any colour to suspect him, guilty of any crime (the judge himself that tried him, when he had heard all they could say against him, declared he found no fault with him), yet they desired Pilate that he might be slain (v. 28), and presented their address against Christ with such fury and outrage that they compelled Pilate to crucify him, not only contrary to his inclination, but contrary to his conscience; they condemned him to so great a death, though they could not convict him of the least sin. Paul cannot charge this upon his hearers, as Peter did (ch. ii. 23): You have with wicked hands crucified and slain him; for these, though Jews, were far enough off; but he charges it upon the Jews at Jerusalem and the rulers, to show what little reason those Jews of the dispersion had to be so jealous for the honour of their nation as they were, when it had brought upon itself such a load and stain of guilt as this, and how justly they might have been cut off from all benefit by the Messiah, who had thus abused him, and yet they were not; but, notwithstanding all this, the preaching of this gospel shall begin at Jerusalem. Secondly, The reason of this was because they knew him not, v. 27. They knew not who he was, nor what errand he came into the world upon; for, if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Christ owned this in extenuation of their crime: They know not what they do; and so did Peter: I wot that through ignorance you did this, ch. iii. 17. It was also because they knew not the voice of the prophets though they heard them read every sabbath day. They did not understand nor consider that it was foretold that the Messiah should suffer, or else they would never have been the instruments of his suffering. Note, Many that read the prophets do not know the voice of the prophets, do not understand the meaning of the scriptures; they have the sound of the gospel in their ears, but not the sense of it in their heads, nor the savour of*

it in their hearts. And therefore men do not know Christ, nor know how to carry it towards him, because they do not know the voice of the prophets, who testified beforehand concerning Christ. Thirdly, God overruled them, for the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old-Testament: *Because they knew not the voice of the prophets*, which warned them not to touch God's Anointed, *they fulfilled them in condemning him*; for so it was written that *Messiah the prince shall be cut off, but not for himself*. Note, It is possible that men may be fulfilling scripture prophecies, even when they are breaking scripture precepts, particularly in the persecution of the church, as in the persecution of Christ. And this justifies the reason which is sometimes given for the obscurity of scripture prophecies, that, if they were too plain and obvious, the accomplishment of them would thereby be prevented. So Paul saith here, *Because they knew not the voice of the prophets*, therefore they have fulfilled them, which implies that if they had understood them they would not have fulfilled them. Fourthly, All that was foretold concerning the sufferings of the Messiah was fulfilled in Christ (*v. 29*): *When they had fulfilled all the rest that was written of him*, even to the giving of him vinegar to drink in his thirst, then they fulfilled what was foretold concerning his being buried. They took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. This is taken notice of here as that which made his resurrection the more illustrious. Christ was separated from this world, as those that are buried have nothing more to do with this world, nor this world with them; and therefore our complete separation from sin is represented by our being buried with Christ. And a good Christian will be willing to be buried alive with Christ. They laid him in a sepulchre, and thought they had him fast.

[3.] That he rose again from the dead, and saw no corruption. This was the great truth that was to be preached; for it is the main pillar by which the whole fabric of the gospel is supported, and therefore he insists largely upon this, and shows,

First, That he rose by consent. When he was imprisoned in the grave for our debt, he did not break prison, but had a fair and legal discharge from the arrest he was under (*v. 30*): *God raised him from the dead*, sent an angel on purpose to roll away the stone from the prison-door, returned to him the spirit which at his death he had committed into the hands of his Father, and quickened him by the Holy Ghost. His enemies laid him in a sepulchre, with design he should always lay there; but God said, *No*; and it was soon seen whose purpose should stand, his or theirs.

Secondly, That there was sufficient proof of his having risen (*v. 31*): *He was seen many days, in divers places, upon divers occasions*, by those that were most intimately acquainted



with him; for they came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, were his constant attendants, and they are his witnesses unto the people. They were appointed to be so, have attested the thing many a time, and are ready to attest it, though they were to die for the same. Paul says nothing of his own seeing him (which he mentions 1 Cor. xv. 8), because it was in a vision, which was more convincing to himself than it could be when produced to others.

Thirdly, That the resurrection of Christ was the performance of the promise made to the patriarchs; it was not only true news, but good news: "In declaring this, we declare unto you glad tidings (v. 32, 33), which should be in a particular manner acceptable to you Jews. So far are we from designing to put any slur upon you, or do you any wrong, that the doctrine we preach, if you receive it aright, and understand it, brings you the greatest honour and satisfaction imaginable; for it is in the resurrection of Christ that the promise which was made to your fathers is fulfilled to you." He acknowledges it to be the dignity of the Jewish nation that to them pertained the promises (Rom ix. 4), that they were the heirs of the promise, as they were the children of the patriarchs to whom the promises were first made. The great promise of the Old Testament was that of the Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, and not the family of Abraham only; though it was to be the peculiar honour of that family that he should be raised up of it, yet it was to be the common benefit of all families that he should be raised up to them. Note, 1. God hath raised up Jesus, advanced him, and exalted him; raised him again (so we read it), meaning from the dead. We may take in both senses. God raised up Jesus to be a prophet at his baptism, to be a priest to make atonement at his death, and to be a king to rule over all at his ascension; and his raising him up from the dead was the confirmation and ratification of all these commissions, and proved him raised of God to these offices. 2. This is the fulfilling of the promises made to the fathers, the promise of sending the Messiah, and of all those benefits and blessings which were to be had with him and by him: "This is he that should come, and in him you have all that God promised in the Messiah, though not all that you promised yourselves." Paul puts himself into the number of the Jews, to whom the promise was fulfilled: To us their children. Now, if those who preached the gospel brought them these glad tidings, instead of looking upon them as enemies to their nation, they ought to caress them as their best friends, and embrace their doctrine with both arms; for if they valued the promise so much, and themselves by it, much more the performance. And the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, which was the great thing that the Jews found themselves

aggrieved at, was so far from infringing the promise made to them that the promise itself, that all the families of the earth should be blessed in the Messiah, could not otherwise be accomplished.

Fourthly, That the resurrection of Christ was the great proof of his being the Son of God, and confirms what was written in the second Psalm (thus ancient was the order in which the Psalms are now placed), *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*. That the resurrection of Christ from the dead was designed to evidence and evince this is plain from that of the apostle (Rom. i. 4): *He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead*. When he was first raised up out of obscurity, God declared concerning him by a voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son* (Matt. iii. 17), which has a plain reference to that in the second Psalm, *Thou art my Son*. Abundance of truth there is couched in those words: that this Jesus was begotten of the Father before all worlds—was the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, as the son is of the father's,—that he was the λόγος, the eternal thought of the eternal mind,—that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin; for upon this account, also, that holy thing was called the Son of God (Luke i. 35), that he was God's agent in creating and governing the world, and in redeeming it and reconciling it to himself, and faithful as a son in his own house, and as such was heir of all things. Now all this, which was declared at Christ's baptism and again at his transfiguration, was undeniably proved by his resurrection. The decree which was so long before declared was then confirmed; and the reason why it was impossible he should be held by the bands of death was because he was the Son of God, and consequently had life in himself, which he could not lay down but with a design to resume it. When his eternal generation is spoken of, it is not improper to say, *This day have I begotten thee*; for from everlasting to everlasting is with God as it were one and the same eternal day. Yet it may also be accommodated to his resurrection, in a subordinate sense, "This day have I made it to appear that I have begotten thee, and this day have I begotten all that are given to thee;" for it is said (1 Pet. i. 3) that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our God and Father, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Fifthly, That his being raised the third day, so as not to see corruption, and to a heavenly life, so as no more to return to corruption, that is, to the state of the dead, as others did who were raised to life, further confirms his being the Messiah promised.

a. He rose to die no more; so it is expressed, Rom. vi. 9: *As concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to*

return to corruption, that is, to the grave, which is called corruption, Job xvii. 14. Lazarus came out of the grave with his grave-clothes on, because he was to use them again; but Christ, having no more occasion for them, left them behind. Now this was the fulfilling of that scripture (Isa. lv. 3), *I will give you the sure mercies of David*; *τὰ ὅσια Δαβὶδ τὰ πιστά*—the holy things of David, the faithful things; for in the promise made to David, and in him to Christ, great stress is laid upon the faithfulness of God (Ps. lxxxix. 1, 2, 5, 24, 33), and upon the oath God had sworn by his holiness, Ps. lxxxix. 35. Now this makes them sure mercies indeed that he who is entrusted with the dispensing of them has risen to die no more; so that he ever lives to see his own will executed, and the blessings he hath purchased for us given out to us. As, if Christ had died and had not risen again, so if he had risen to die again, we had come short of the sure mercies, or at least could not have been sure of them.

b. He rose so soon after he was dead that his body did not see corruption; for it is not till the third day that the body begins to change. Now this was promised to David; it was one of the *sure mercies of David*, for it was said to him in Ps. xvi. 10, *Neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption*, v. 35. God had promised to David that he would raise up the Messiah of his seed, who should therefore be a man, but should not, like other men, see corruption. This promise could not have its accomplishment in David, but looked forward to Christ.

(a.) It could not be accomplished in David himself (v. 36), for *David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God*, who raised him up to be what he was, *fell asleep, and was laid to his fathers, and saw corruption*. Here we have a short account of the life, death, and burial, of the patriarch David, and his continuance under the power of death. [a.] His life: *He served his own generation, by the will of God*, before he slept the sleep of death. David was a useful good man; he did good in the world *by the will of God*. He made God's precepts his rule; he served his own generation so as therein to serve God; he so served and pleased men (as whatever the king did pleased the people, 2 Sam. iii. 36), as still to keep himself the faithful servant of God. See Gal. i. 10. He served the good of men, but did not serve the will of men. Or, by the will of God's providence so ordering it, qualifying him for, and calling him to, a public station, he served his own generation; for every creature is that to us which God makes it to be. David was a great blessing to the age wherein he lived; he was the servant of his generation: many are the curse, and plague, and burden of their generation. Even those that are in a lower and narrower sphere must look upon it that they live to serve their generation; and those that will do good in the world must make them-

seives servants of all, 1 Cor. ix. 19. We were not born for ourselves, but are members of communities, to which we must study to be serviceable. Yet here is the difference between David and Christ, that David was to serve only his own generation, that generation in which he lived, and therefore when he had done what he had to do, and written what he had to write, he died, and continued in the grave; but Christ (not by his writings or words upon record only as David, but by his personal agency) was to serve all generations, must ever live to reign over the house of Jacob, not as David, for forty years, but for all ages, as long as the sun and moon endure, Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36, 37. His throne must be as the days of heaven, and all generations must be blessed in him, Ps. lxxii. 17. [b.] His death: *He fell asleep*. Death is a sleep, a quiet rest, to those who, while they lived, laboured in the service of God and their generation. Observe, He did not fall asleep till he had served his generation, till he had done the work for which God raised him up. God's servants have their work assigned them; and, when they have accomplished as *a hireling their day*, then, and not till then, they are called to rest. God's witnesses never die till they have finished their testimony; and then *the sleep, the death, of the labouring man will be sweet*. David was not permitted to build the temple, and therefore when he had made preparation for it, which was the service he was designed to, he fell asleep, and left the work to Solomon. [c.] His burial: *He was laid to his fathers*. Though he was buried in *the city of David* (1 Kings ii. 10), and not in the sepulchre of Jesse his father in Bethlehem, yet he might be said to be *laid to his fathers*; for the grave, in general, is the habitation of our fathers, of those that are gone before us, Ps. xlix. 19. [d.] His continuance in the grave: *He saw corruption*. We are sure he did not rise again; this Peter insists upon when he freely speaks of the patriarch David (ch. ii. 29): *He is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day*. He saw corruption, and therefore that promise could not have its accomplishment in him. But,

(b.) It was accomplished in the Lord Jesus (v. 37): *He whom God raised again saw no corruption*; for it was in him that the sure mercies were to be reserved for us. He rose the third day, and therefore did not see corruption then; and he rose to die no more, and therefore never did. Of him therefore the promise must be understood, and no other.

c. Having given them this account of the Lord Jesus, he comes to make application of it.

(a.) In the midst of his discourse, to engage their attention, he had told his hearers that they were concerned in all this (v. 26): *"To you is the word of this salvation sent, to you first. If you by your unbelief make it a word*



of rejection to you, you may thank yourselves; but it is sent to you for a word of salvation; if it be not so, it is your own fault." Let them not peevishly argue that because it was sent to the Gentiles, who had no communion with them, therefore it was not sent to them; for to them it was sent in the first place. "*To you men* this is sent, and not to the angels that sinned. To you living men, and not to the congregation of the dead and damned, whose day of grace is over." He therefore speaks to them with tenderness and respect: You are *men and brethren*; and so we are to look upon all those that stand fair with us for the great salvation as having the word of salvation sent to them. Those to whom he does by warrant from heaven here bring the *word of salvation* are, [a.] The native Jews, Hebrews of the Hebrews, as Paul himself was: *Children of the stock of Abraham*, though a degenerate race, yet to you is this word of salvation sent; nay, it is therefore sent to you, to save you from your sins." It is an advantage to be of a good stock; for, though salvation does not always follow the children of godly parents, yet the word of salvation does: *Abraham will command his children and his household after him.* [b.] The proselytes, the Gentiles by birth, that were in some degree brought over to the Jews' religion: "*Whosoever among you that feareth God.* You that have a sense of natural religion, and have subjected yourselves to the laws of that, and taken hold of the comforts of that, *to you is the word of this salvation sent*; you need the further discoveries and directions of revealed religion, are prepared for them, and will bid them welcome, and therefore shall certainly be welcome to take the benefit of them."

(b.) In the close of his discourse he applies what he had said concerning Christ to his hearers. He had told them a long story concerning *this Jesus*; now they would be ready to ask, What is all this to us? And he tells them plainly what it is to them.

[a.] It will be their unspeakable advantage if they embrace Jesus Christ, and believe this word of salvation. It will relieve them where their greatest danger lies; and that is from the guilt of their sins: "*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren*—we are warranted to proclaim it to you, and you are called to take notice of it." He did not stand up to preach before them, but to preach to them, and not without hopes of prevailing with them; for they are men, reasonable creatures, and capable of being argued with; they are *brethren*, spoken to, and dealt with, by men like themselves; not only of the same nature, but of the same nation. It is proper for the preachers of the gospel to call their hearers brethren, as speaking familiarly to them, and with an affectionate concern for their welfare, and as being equally interested with them in the

gospel they preach. Let all that hear the gospel of Christ know these two things:—*1st*, That it is an act of indemnity granted by the King of kings to the children of men, who stand attainted at his bar of treason against his crown and dignity; and it is for and in consideration of the mediation of Christ between God and man that this act of grace is passed and proclaimed (v. 38): "*Through this man, who died and rose again, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.* We have to tell you, in God's name, that your sins, though many and great, may be forgiven, and how it is come about that they may be so, without any injury to God's honour, and how you may obtain the forgiveness of your sins. We are to preach repentance for the remission of sins, and divine grace giving both *repentance and remission of sins*. The remission of sins is *through this man*. By his merit it was purchased, in his name it is offered, and by his authority it is bestowed; and therefore you are concerned to be acquainted with him, and interested in him. We preach to you *the forgiveness of sins*. That is the salvation we bring you, the word of God; and therefore you ought to bid us welcome and look upon us as your friends, and messengers of good tidings." *2ndly*, That it does that for us which the law of Moses could not do. The Jews were jealous for the law, and because it prescribed expiatory and pacificatory sacrifices, and a great variety of purifications, fancied they might be justified by it before God. "No," saith Paul, "be it known to you that it is by Christ only that *those who believe in him*, and none else, are *justified from all things*, from all the guilt and stain of sin, *from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses*" (v. 39); therefore they ought to entertain and embrace the gospel, and not to adhere to the law in opposition to it, because the gospel is perfective, not destructive, of the law. Note, 1. The great concern of sinners is to be justified, to be acquitted from guilt and accepted as righteous in God's sight. 2. Those who are truly justified are acquitted from all their guilt; for if any be left charged upon the sinner he is undone. 3. It was impossible for a sinner to be justified by the law of Moses. Not by his moral law, for we have all broken it, and are transgressing it daily, so that instead of justifying us it condemns us. Not by his remedial law, for it was not possible that the *blood of bulls and goats should take away sin*, should satisfy God's offended justice, or pacify the sinner's wounded conscience. It was but a ritual and typical institution. See Heb. ix. 9; x. 1, 4. 4. By Jesus Christ we obtain a complete justification; for by him a complete atonement was made for sin. We are justified, not only by him as our Judge, but by him as our righteousness, *the Lord our righteousness*. 5. All that believe in Christ,



that rely upon him and give up themselves to be ruled by him, are justified by him, and none but they. 6. What the law *could not do for us, in that it was weak*, that the gospel of Christ does; and therefore it was folly, out of a jealousy for the law of Moses and the honour of that institution, to conceive a jealousy of the gospel of Christ and the designs of that more perfect institution.

[b.] It is at their utmost peril if they reject the gospel of Christ, and turn their backs upon the offer now made them (v, 40, 41): "*Beware therefore; you have a fair invitation given you, look to yourselves, lest you either neglect or oppose it.*" Note, Those to whom the gospel is preached must see themselves upon their trial and good behaviour, and are concerned to beware lest they be found refusers of the grace offered. "*Beware lest you not only come short of the blessings and benefits spoken of in the prophets as coming upon those that believe, but fall under the doom spoken of in the prophets as coming upon those that persist in unbelief: lest that come upon you which is spoken of.*" Note, The threatenings are warnings; what we are told will come upon impenitent sinners is designed to awaken us to beware lest it should come upon us. Now the prophecy referred to we have Hab. i. 5, where the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans is foretold as an incredible unparalleled destruction; and this is here applied to the destruction that was coming upon that nation by the Romans, for their rejecting the gospel of Christ. The apostle follows the Septuagint translation, which reads, *Behold, you despisers* (for, *behold, you among the heathen*); because it made the text more apposite to his purpose. 1st, "Take heed lest the guilt come upon you which was spoken of in the prophets—the guilt of despising the gospel and the tenders of it, and despising the Gentiles that were advanced to partake of it. Beware lest it be said to you, *Behold, you despisers.*" Note, It is the ruin of many that they despise religion, they look upon it as a thing below them, and are not willing to stoop to it. 2ndly, "Take heed lest the judgment come upon you which was spoken of in the prophets: that *you shall wonder and perish*, that is, wonderfully perish; your perdition shall be amazing to yourselves and all about you." Those that will not wonder and be saved shall wonder and perish. Those that enjoyed the privileges of the church, and flattered themselves with a conceit that these would save them, will wonder when they find their vain presumption overruled and that their privileges do but make their condemnation the more intolerable. Let the unbelieving Jews expect that God will *work a work in their days which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.* This may be understood as a prediction, either, 1. Of their sin, that they should be incredulous, that that great work of God the redemption

of the world by Christ, though it should be in the most solemn manner declared unto them, yet they would *in no wise believe it*, Isa. liii. 1, *Who hath believed our report?* Though it was of God's working, to whom nothing is impossible, and of his declaring, who cannot lie, yet they would not give credit to it. Those that had the honour and advantage to have this work wrought in their days had not the grace to believe it. Or, 2. Of their destruction. The dissolving of the Jewish polity, the taking of the kingdom of God from them and giving it to the Gentiles, the destruction of their holy house and city, and the dispersion of their people, was a work which one would not have believed. should have ever been done, considering how much they had been the favourites of Heaven. The calamities that were brought upon them were such as were never before brought upon any people, Matt. xxiv. 21. It was said of their destruction by the Chaldeans, and it was true of their last destruction, *All the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that the enemy would have entered into the gates of Jerusalem as they did*, Lam. iv. 12. Thus is there a *strange punishment to the workers of iniquity*, especially to the despisers of Christ, Job xxxi. 3.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. 43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. 44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord and as many as were cr-



daigned to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. 50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts, 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

The design of this story being to vindicate the apostles, especially Paul (as he doth himself at large, Rom. xi.), from the reflections of the Jews upon him for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, it is here observed that he proceeded therein with all the caution imaginable, and upon due consideration, of which we have here an instance.

I. There were some of the Jews that were so incensed against the preaching of the gospel, not to the Gentiles, but to themselves, that they would not bear to hear it, but *went out of the synagogue* while Paul was preaching (v. 42), in contempt of him and his doctrine, and to the disturbance of the congregation. It is probable they whispered among themselves, exciting one another to it, and did it by consent. Now this bespoke, 1. An open infidelity, as plain a profession of unbelief as coming to hear the gospel is of faith. They thus publicly avowed their contempt of Christ and of his doctrine and law, were not ashamed, neither could they blush; and they thus endeavoured to beget prejudices in the minds of others against the gospel; they went out to draw others to follow their pernicious ways. 2. An obstinate infidelity. They went out of the synagogue, not only to show that they did not believe the gospel, but because they were resolved they would not, and therefore got out of the hearing of those things that had a tendency to convince them. They stopped their ears like the deaf adder. Justly therefore was the gospel taken from them, when they first took themselves from it, and turned themselves out of the church before they were turned out of it. For it is certainly true that God never leaves any till they first leave him.

II. The Gentiles were as willing to hear the gospel as those rude and ill-conditioned Jews were to get out of the hearing of it: *They besought that these words*, or words to this effect, *might be preached to them the next sabbath; in the week between*, so some take it; on the second and fifth days of the week, which in some synagogues were their lecture days. But it appears (v. 44) that it was the next sabbath day that they came together. They begged, 1. That the same offer might

be made to them that was made to the Jews. Paul in this sermon had brought the word of salvation to the Jews and proselytes, but had taken no notice of the Gentiles; and therefore they begged that forgiveness of sins through Christ might be preached to them, as it was to the Jews. The Jews' leavings, nay, loathings, were their longings. This justifies Paul in his preaching to them, that he was invited to it, as Peter was sent for to Cornelius. Who could refuse to break the bread of life to those who begged so hard for it, and to give that to the poor at the door which the children at the table threw under their feet? 2. That the same instructions might be given to them. They had heard the doctrine of Christ, but did not understand it at the first hearing, nor could they remember all that they had heard, and therefore they begged it might be preached to them again. Note, It is good to have the word of Christ repeated to us. What we have heard we should desire to hear again, that it may take deep root in us, and the nail that is driven may be clenched and be *as a nail in a sure place*. To hear the same things should not be grievous, because it is safe, Phil. iii. 1. It aggravates the bad disposition of the Jews that the Gentiles desired to hear that often which they were not willing to hear once; and commends the good disposition of the Gentiles that they did not follow the bad example which the Jews set them.

III. There were some, nay, there were many, both of Jews and proselytes, that were wrought upon by the preaching of the gospel. Those who aggravated the matter of the Jews' rejection by the preaching of the gospel, cried out, as is usual in such cases, "They have cast away, and cast off, all the people of God." "Nay," says Paul, "it is not so; for abundance of the Jews have embraced Christ, and are taken in;" himself for one, Rom. xi. 1, 5. So it was here: *Many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas*, and received further instructions and encouragement from them. 1. They submitted to the grace of God, and were admitted to the benefit and comfort of it, which is implied in their being exhorted to continue in it. They *followed Paul and Barnabas*; they became their disciples, or rather the disciples of Christ, whose agents they were. Those that join themselves to Christ will join themselves to his ministers, and follow them. And Paul and Barnabas, though they were sent to the Gentiles, yet bade those of the Jews welcome that were willing to come under their instructions, such hearty well-wishers were they to all the Jews and their friends, if they pleased. 2. They were exhorted and encouraged to persevere herein: *Paul and Barnabas, speaking to them with all the freedom and friendship imaginable, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God*, to hold fast that which they had received, to con-

ture in their belief of the gospel of grace, their dependence upon the Spirit of grace, and their attendance upon the means of grace. And the grace of God shall not be wanting to those who thus continue in it.

IV. There was a cheerful attendance upon the preaching of the gospel the *next sabbath day* (v. 44): *Almost the whole city* (the generality of whom were Gentiles) *came together to hear the word of God*. 1. It is probable that Paul and Barnabas were not idle in the week-days, but took all opportunities in the week between (as some think the Gentiles desired) to bring them acquainted with Christ, and to raise their expectations from him. They did a great deal of service to the gospel in private discourse and conversation, as well as in their public sermons. Wisdom cried in the chief places of concourse, and the opening of the gates, as well as in the synagogues, Prov. i. 20, 21. 2. This brought a vast concourse of people to the synagogue on the sabbath day. Some came out of curiosity, the thing being new; others longing to see what the Jews would do upon the second tender of the gospel to them; and many who had heard something of the word of God came to hear more, and to hear it, *not as the word of men but as the word of God*, by which we must be ruled and judged. Now this justified Paul in preaching to the Gentiles, that he met with the most encouraging auditors among them. *There the fields were white to the harvest*, and therefore why should he not there put in his sickle?

V. The Jews were enraged at this; and not only would not receive the gospel themselves, but were filled with indignation at those that crowded after it (v. 45): *When the Jews saw the multitudes*, and considered what an encouragement it was to Paul to go on in his work when he saw the people thus flying like doves to their windows, and what probability there was that among these multitudes some would be, without doubt, wrought upon, and probably the greater part, to embrace Christ — *this filled them with envy*.

1. They grudged the interest the apostles had in the people, were vexed to see the synagogue so full when they were going to preach. This was the same spirit that worked in the Pharisees towards Christ; they were cut to the heart when they saw *the whole world go after him*. When the kingdom of heaven was opened they not only would not go in themselves, but were angry with those that did. 2. They opposed the doctrine the apostles preached: *They spoke against those things that were spoken by Paul*, cavilled at them, started objections against them, finding some fault or other with every thing he said, *contradicting and blaspheming*; ἀντίλεγον ἀντιλογούντες — *contradicting, they contradicted*. They did it with the utmost spite and rage imaginable: they persisted in their contradiction, and nothing would silence them. they contradicted for contradiction-sake, and

denied that which was most evident; and, when they could find no colour of objection, they broke out into ill language against Christ and his gospel, blaspheming him and it. From the language of the carnal man that receives not the things of the Spirit of God, and therefore contradicts them, they proceed to the language of incarnate devils, and blaspheme them. Commonly those who begin with contradicting end with blaspheming.

VI. The apostles hereupon solemnly and openly declare themselves discharged from their obligations to the Jews, and at liberty to bring the word of salvation to the Gentiles, even by the tacit consent of the Jews themselves. Never let the Jew lay the fault of the carrying of the kingdom of God to the Gentiles upon the apostles, for that complaint of theirs is for ever silenced by their own act and deed, for what they did here is for ever a bar to it. "Tender and refusal (we say) are good payment in law." The Jews had the tender of the gospel, and did refuse it, and therefore ought not to say any thing against the Gentiles having it. In declaring this, it is said (v. 46), *Paul and Barnabas waxed bold*, more bold than they had been while they were shy of looking favourably upon the Gentiles, for fear of giving offence to the Jews, and laying a stumbling-block in their way. Note, There is a time for the preachers of the gospel to show as much of the boldness of the lion as of the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove. When the adversaries of Christ's cause begin to be daring, it is not for its advocates to be timid. While there is any hope of working upon those that oppose themselves they must be *instructed with meekness* (2 Tim. ii. 25); but, when that method has long been tried in vain, we must wax bold, and tell them what will be the issue of their opposition. The impudence of the enemies of the gospel, instead of frightening, should rather embolden its friends; for they are sure that they have a good cause, and they know in whom they have trusted to bear them out. Now Paul and Barnabas, having made the Jews a fair offer of gospel grace, here give them fair notice of their bringing it to the Gentiles, *if by any means* (as Paul says Rom. xi. 14) *they might provoke them to emulation*. 1. They own that the Jews were entitled to the first offer: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, to whom the promise was made, to you of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to whom Christ reckoned himself first sent." And his charge to the preachers of his gospel to begin at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47) was a tacit direction to all that went into other countries to begin with the Jews, to whom pertained the giving of the law, and therefore the preaching of the gospel. *Let the children first be served*, Mark vii. 27. 2. They charge them with the refusal of it: *You put it from you; you will not accept of it; nay, you will*



not so much as bear the offer of it, but take it as an affront to you." If men put the gospel from them, God justly takes it from them; why should manna be given to those that loathe it and call it *light bread*, or the privileges of the gospel forced on those that put them away, and say, *We have no part in David?* Herein they judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life. In one sense we must all judge ourselves unworthy of everlasting life, for there is nothing in us, nor done by us, by which we can pretend to merit it, and we must be made sensible of this; but here the meaning is, "You discover, or make it to appear, that you are not meet for eternal life; you throw away all your claims and give up your pretensions to it; since you will not take it from his hands, into whose hand the Father has given it, *spovere, you do*, in effect, *pass this judgment* upon yourselves, and *out of your own mouth you shall be judged*; you will not have it by Christ, by whom alone it is to be had, and so shall your doom be, you shall not have it at all." 3. Upon this they ground their preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised: "Since you will not accept eternal life as it is offered, our way is plain, *Lo, we turn to the Gentiles*. If one will not, another will. If those that were first invited to the wedding-feast will not come, we must invite out of the highways and hedges those that will, for *the wedding must be furnished with guests*. If he that is next of kin will not do the kinsman's part, he must not complain that another will," Ruth iv. 4. 4. They justify themselves in this by a divine warrant (v. 47): "*For so hath the Lord commanded us*; the Lord Jesus gave us directions to witness to him in Jerusalem and Judea first, and after that *to the utmost part of the earth*, to preach the gospel to every creature, to disciple all nations." This is according to what was foretold in the Old-Testament. When the Messiah, in the prospect of the Jews' infidelity, was ready to say, *I have laboured in vain*, he was told, to his satisfaction, that though *Israel were not gathered*, yet *he should be glorious*, that his blood should not be shed in vain, nor his purchase made in vain, nor his doctrine preached in vain, nor his Spirit sent in vain,—"For *I have set thee*, not only raised thee up, but established thee, to be *a light of the Gentiles*, not only a shining light for a time, but a standing light, set thee for a light, *that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth*." Note, (1.) Christ is not only the Saviour, but the salvation, is himself our righteousness, and life, and strength. (2.) Wherever Christ is designed to be salvation, he is set up to be a light; he enlightens the understanding, and so saves the soul. (3.) He is, and is to be, light and salvation to the Gentiles, to the ends of the earth. Those of every nation shall be welcome to him, some of every nation have heard of him (Rom. x. 18), and all nations shall at length become his

kingdom. This prophecy has had its accomplishment in part in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in this island of ours, which lies, as it were, in the *ends of the earth*, a corner of the world, and shall be accomplished more and more when the time comes for the *bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles*.

VII. The Gentiles cheerfully embraced that which the Jews scornfully rejected, v. 48, 49. Never was land lost for want of heirs; *through the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles*: the casting off of them was the reconciling of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; so the apostle shows at large, Rom. xi. 11, 12, 15. The Jews, the natural branches, were broken off, and the Gentiles, that were branches of the wild olive, were thereupon grafted in, v. 17, 19. Now here we are told how the Gentiles welcomed this happy turn in their favour.

1. They took the comfort of it: *When they heard this they were glad*. It was good news to them that they might have admission into covenant and communion with God by a clearer, nearer, and better way than submitting to the ceremonial law, and being proselyted to the Jewish religion,—that the partition-wall was taken down and they were as welcome to the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom as the Jews themselves, and might share in their promise, without coming under their yoke. This was indeed *glad tidings of great joy to all people*. Note, Our being put into a possibility of salvation, and a capacity for it, ought to be the matter of our rejoicing; when the Gentiles did but hear that the offers of grace should be made them, the word of grace preached to them, and the means of grace afforded them, *they were glad*. "Now there is some hope for us." Many grieve under doubts whether they have an interest in Christ or no, when they should be rejoicing that they have an interest in him; the golden sceptre is held out to them, and they are invited to come and touch the top of it.

2. They gave God the praise of it: *They glorified the word of the Lord*; that is, Christ (so some), the essential Word; they entertained a profound veneration for him, and expressed the high thoughts they had of him. Or, rather, *the gospel*; the more they knew of it, the more they admired it. Oh! what a light, what a power, what a treasure, does this gospel bring along with it! How excellent are its truths, its precepts, its promises! How far transcending all other institutions! How plainly divine and heavenly is its origin! Thus they *glorified the word of the Lord*, and it is this which he has himself *magnified above all his name* (Ps. cxxxviii. 2), and will *magnify and make honourable*, Isa. xlii. 21. They glorified the word of the Lord, (1.) Because now the knowledge of it was diffused, and not confined to the Jews only. Note, It is the glory of the word of the Lord that the



further it spreads the brighter it shines, which shows it to be not like the light of the candle, but like that of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. (2.) Because now the knowledge of it was brought to them. Note, Those speak best of the honour of the word of the Lord that speak experimentally, that have themselves been subdued by its power, and comforted by its sweetness.

3. Many of them became, not only professors of the Christian faith, but sincerely obedient to the faith: *As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* God by his Spirit wrought true faith in those for whom he had in his councils from everlasting designed a happiness to everlasting. (1.) Those believed to whom God gave grace to believe, whom by a secret and mighty operation he brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ, and made willing in the day of his power. Those came to Christ whom the Father drew, and to whom the Spirit made the gospel call effectual. It is called *the faith of the operation of God* (Col. ii. 12), and is said to be *wrought by the same power that raised up Christ*, Eph. i. 19, 20. (2.) God gave this grace to believe to all those among them who were ordained to eternal life (for whom he had predestinated, them he also called, Rom. viii. 30); or, as many as were disposed to eternal life, as many as had a concern about their eternal state, and aimed to make sure of eternal life, believed in Christ, in whom God hath treasured up that life (1 John v. 11), and who is the only way to it; and it was the grace of God that wrought it in them. Thus all those captives, and those only, took the benefit of Cyrus's proclamation, *whose spirit God had raised up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem*, Ezra i. 5. Those will be brought to believe in Christ that by his grace are well disposed to eternal life, and make this their aim.

4. When they believed they did what they could to spread the knowledge of Christ and his gospel among their neighbours (v. 49): *And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.* When it was received with so much satisfaction in the chief city, it soon spread into all parts of the country. Those new converts were themselves ready to communicate to others that which they were so full of themselves. *The Lord gave the word, and then great was the company of those that published it*, Ps. lxxviii. 11. Those that have become acquainted with Christ themselves will do what they can to bring others acquainted with him. Those in great and rich cities that have received the gospel should not think to engross it, as if, like learning and philosophy, it were only to be the entertainment of the more polite and elevated part of mankind, but should do what they can to get it published in the country among the ordinary sort of people, the poor and unlearned, who have souls to be saved as well as they.

VIII. Paul and Barnabas, having sown the seeds of a Christian church there, quitted the place, and went to do the like elsewhere. We read not any thing of their working miracles here, to confirm their doctrine, and to convince people of the truth of it; for, though God then did ordinarily make use of that method of conviction, yet he could, when he pleased, do his work without it; and begetting faith by the immediate influence of his Spirit was itself the greatest miracle to those in whom it was wrought. Yet, it is probable that they did work miracles, for we find they did in the next place they came to, *ch. xiv. 3.* Now here we are told,

1. How the unbelieving Jews expelled the apostles out of that country. They first turned their back upon them, and then *lifted up the heel against them* (v. 50): *They raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas*, excited the mob to persecute them in their way by insulting their persons as they went along the streets; excited the magistrates to persecute them in their way, by imprisoning and punishing them. When they could not resist the wisdom and spirit wherewith they spoke, they had recourse to these brutish methods the last refuge of an obstinate infidelity. Satan and his agents are most exasperated against the preachers of the gospel when they see them go on successfully, and therefore then will be sure to raise persecution against them. Thus it has been the common lot of the best men in the world to suffer ill for doing well, to be persecuted instead of being preferred for the good services they have done to mankind. Observe, (1.) What method the Jews took to give them trouble: *They stired up the devout and honourable women against them.* They could not make any considerable interest themselves, but they applied to some ladies of quality in the city, that were well affected to the Jewish religion, and were proselytes of the gate, therefore called *devout women*. These, according to the genius of their sex, were zealous in their way, and bigoted; and it was easy, by false stories and misrepresentations, to incense them against the gospel of Christ, as if it had been destructive of all religion, of which really it is perfective. It is good to see honourable women devout, and well affected to religious worship: the less they have to do in the world, the more they should do for their souls, and the more time they should spend in communion with God; but it is sad when, under colour of devotion to God, they conceive an enmity to Christ, as those here mentioned. What! women persecutors! Can they forget the tenderness and compassion of their sex? What! honourable women! Can they thus stain their honour, and disgrace themselves, and do so mean a thing? But, which is strangest of all, devout women! Will they kill Christ's servants, and think therein they do God service? Let those



therefore that have zeal see that it be according to knowledge. By these devout and honorable women they stirred up likewise the chief men of the city, the magistrates and the rulers, who had power in their hands and set them against the apostles, and they had so little consideration as to suffer themselves to be made the tools of this ill-natured party, who would neither go into the kingdom of heaven themselves nor suffer those who were entering to go in. (2.) How far they carried it, so far that they expelled them out of their coasts; they banished them, ordered them to be carried, as we say, from constable to constable, till they were forced out of their jurisdiction; so that it was not by fear, but downright violence, that they were driven out. This was one method which the overruling providence of God took to keep the first planters of the church from staying too long at a place; as Matt. x. 23, *When they persecute you in one city flee to another*, that thus you may the sooner go over the cities of Israel. This was likewise a method God took to make those that were well disposed the more warmly affected towards the apostles; for it is natural to us to pity those that are persecuted, to think the better of those that suffer when we know they suffer unjustly, and to be the more ready to help them. The expelling of the apostles out of their coasts made people inquisitive what evil they had done, and perhaps raised them more friends than conniving at them in their coasts would have done.

2. How the apostles abandoned and rejected the unbelieving Jews (v. 51): *They shook off the dust of their feet against them*. When they went out of the city they used this ceremony in the sight of those that sat in the gate; or, when they went out of the borders of their country, in the sight of those that were sent to see the country rid of them. Hereby, (1.) They declared that they would have no more to do with them, would take nothing that was theirs; for *they sought not theirs, but them*. Dust they are, and let them keep their dust to themselves, it shall not cleave to them. (2.) They expressed their detestation of their infidelity, and that, though they were Jews by birth, yet, having rejected the gospel of Christ, they were in their eyes no better than heathen and profane. As Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, are equally acceptable to God and good men; so, if they do not, they are equally abominable. (3.) Thus they set them at defiance, and expressed their contempt of them and their malice, which they looked upon as impotent. It was as much as to say, "Do your worst, we do not fear you; we know whom we serve and whom we have trusted." (4.) Thus they left a testimony behind them that they had had a fair offer made them of the grace of the gospel, which shall be proved against them in the day of judgment. This dust will prove that the preachers of

the gospel had been among them, but were expelled by them. Thus Christ had ordered them to do, and for this reason, Matt. x. 14; Luke ix. 5. *When they left them, they came to Iconium*, not so much for safety, as for work.

3. What frame they left the new converts in at Antioch (v. 52): *The disciples*, when they saw with what courage and cheerfulness Paul and Barnabas not only bore the indignities that were done them, but went on with their work notwithstanding, they were in like manner inspired. (1.) They were very cheerful. One would have expected that when Paul and Barnabas were expelled out of their coasts, and perhaps forbidden to return upon pain of death, the disciples would have been full of grief and full of fear, looking for no other than that, if the planters of Christianity go, the plantation would soon come to nothing; or that it would be their turn next to be banished the country, and to them it would be more grievous, for it was their own. But no; *they were filled with joy in Christ*, had such a satisfactory assurance of Christ's carrying on and perfecting his own work in them and among them, and that either he would screen them from trouble or bear them up under it, that all their fears were swallowed up in their believing joys. (2.) They were courageous, wonderfully animated with a holy resolution to cleave to Christ, whatever difficulties they met with. This seems especially to be meant by *their being filled with the Holy Ghost*, for the same expression is used of Peter's boldness (ch. iv. 8), and Stephen's (ch. vii. 55), and Paul's, ch. xiii. 9. The more we relish the comforts and encouragements we meet with in the power of godliness, and the fuller our hearts are of them, the better prepared we are to face the difficulties we meet with in the profession of godliness.

#### CHAP. XIV.

We have, in this chapter, a further account of the progress of the gospel, by the ministry of Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles; it goes on conquering and to conquer, yet meeting with opposition, as before, among the unbelieving Jews. Here is, I. Their successful preaching of the gospel for some time at Iconium, and their being driven thence by the violence of their persecutors, both Jews and Gentiles, and forced into the neighbouring countries, ver. 1-7. II. Their healing a lame man at Lystra, and the profound veneration which the people conceived of them thereupon, which they had much ado to keep from running into an extreme, ver. 8-18. III. The outrage of the people against Paul, at the instigation of the Jews, the effect of which was that they stoned him, as they thought, to death; but he was wonderfully restored to life, ver. 19, 20. IV. The visit which Paul and Barnabas made to the churches which they had planted, to confirm them, and put them into order, ver. 21-23. V. They return to Antioch, whence they were sent forth; the good they did by the way, and the report they made to the church of Antioch of their expedition, and, if I may so say, of the campaign they had made, ver. 24-28.

AND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. 3 Long time therefore

abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, 6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: 7 And there they preached the gospel.

In these verses we have,

I. The preaching of the gospel in Iconium, whither the apostles were forced to retire from Antioch. As the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church, so the banishment of the confessors has helped to scatter that seed. Observe, 1. How they made the first offer of the gospel to the Jews in their synagogues; thither they went, not only as to a place of meeting, but as to a place of meeting with them, to whom, wherever they came, they were to apply themselves in the first place. Though the Jews at Antioch had used them barbarously, yet they did not therefore decline preaching the gospel to the Jews at Iconium, who perhaps might be better disposed. Let not those of any denomination be condemned in the gross, nor some suffer for others' faults; but let us do good to those who have done evil to us. Though the blood-thirsty hate the upright, yet the just seek their soul (Prov. xxix. 10), seek the salvation of it. 2. How the apostles concurred herein. Notice is taken of this, that they went both together into the synagogue, to testify their unanimity and mutual affection, that people might say, See how they love one another, and might think the better of Christianity, and that they might strengthen one another's hands and confirm one another's testimony, and out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established. They did not go one one day and another another, nor one go at the beginning and the other some time after; but they went in both together.

II. The success of their preaching there: They so spoke that a great multitude, some hundreds perhaps, if not thousands, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, that is the Gentiles, believed. Observe here, 1. That the gospel was now preached to Jews and Gentiles together, and those of each denomination that believed came together into the church. In the close of the foregoing chapter it was preached first to the Jews, and some of them believed, and then to the Gentiles,

and some of them believed; but here they are put together, being put upon the same level. The Jews have not so lost their preference as to be thrown behind, only the Gentiles are brought to stand upon even terms with them; both are reconciled to God in one body (Ephes. ii. 16), and both together admitted into the church without distinction. 2. There seems to have been something remarkable in the manner of the apostles' preaching here, which contributed to their success: They so spoke that a great multitude believed—so plainly, so convincingly, with such an evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, and with such power; they so spoke, so warmly, so affectionately, and with such a manifest concern for the souls of men, that one might perceive they were not only convinced, but filled, with the things they spoke of, and that what they spoke came from the heart and therefore was likely to reach to the heart; they so spoke, so earnestly and so seriously, so boldly and courageously, that those who heard them could not but say that God was with them of a truth. Yet the success was not to be attributed to the manner of their preaching, but to the Spirit of God, who made use of that means.

III. The opposition that their preaching met with there, and the trouble that was created them; lest they should be puffed up with the multitude of their converts, there was given them this thorn in the flesh. 1. Unbelieving Jews were the first spring of their trouble here, as elsewhere (v. 2): they stirred up the Gentiles. The influence which the gospel had upon many of the Gentiles, and their embracing it, as it provoked some of the Jews to a holy jealousy and stirred them up to receive the gospel too (Rom. xi. 14), so it provoked others of them to a wicked jealousy, and exasperated them against the gospel. Thus as good instructions, so good examples, which to some are a savour of life unto life, to others are a savour of death unto death. See 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. 2. Disaffected Gentiles, irritated by the unbelieving Jews, were likely to be the instruments of their trouble. The Jews, by false suggestions, which they were continually buzzing in the ears of the Gentiles, made their minds evil affected against the brethren, whom of themselves they were inclined to think favourably of. They not only took occasion in all companies, as it came in their way, but made it their business to go purposely to such as they had any acquaintance with, and said all that their wit or malice could invent to beget in them not only a mean but an ill opinion of Christianity, telling them how destructive it would certainly be to their pagan theology and worship; and, for their parts, they would rather be Gentiles than Christians. Thus they soured and embittered their spirits against both the converters and the converted. The old serpent did, by their poisonous tongues, infuse his venom against the seed of



the woman into the minds of these Gentiles, and this was a root of bitterness in them, bearing gall and wormwood. It is no wonder if those who are ill affected towards good people wish ill to them, speak ill of them, and contrive ill against them; it is all owing to ill will. 'Εκάκωσαν, they molested and vexed the minds of the Gentiles (so some of the critics take it); they were continually teasing them with their impertinent solicitations. The tools of persecutors have a dog's life, set on continually.

IV. Their continuance in their work there, notwithstanding this opposition, and God's owning them in it, v. 3. We have here, 1. The apostles working for Christ, faithfully and diligently, according to the trust committed to them. Because the minds of the Gentiles were evil affected against them, one would think that therefore they should have withdrawn and hastened out of the way, or, if they had preached, should have preached cautiously, for fear of giving further provocation to those who were already enough enraged. No; on the contrary, therefore they abode there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord. The more they perceived the spite and rancour of the town against the new converts, the more they were animated to go on in their work, and the more needful they saw it to continue among them, to confirm them in the faith, and to comfort them. They spoke boldly, and were not afraid of giving offence to the unbelieving Jews. What God said to the prophet, with reference to the unbelieving Jews in his day, was now made good to the apostles: *I have made thy face strong against their faces*, Ezek. iii. 7—9. But observe what it was that animated them: *They spoke boldly in the Lord*, in his strength, and trusting in him to bear them out; not depending upon any thing in themselves. *They were strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. 2. Christ working with the apostles, according to his promise, *Lo, I am with you always*. When they went on in his name and strength, he failed not to give testimony to the word of his grace. Note, (1.) The gospel is a word of grace, the assurance of God's good will to us and the means of his good work in us. It is the word of Christ's grace, for it is in him alone that we find favour with God. (2.) Christ himself has attested this word of grace, who is the Amen, the faithful witness; he has assured us that it is the word of God, and that we may venture our souls upon it. As it was said in general concerning the first preachers of the gospel that they had *the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following* (Mark xvi. 20), so it is said particularly concerning the apostles here that *the Lord confirmed their testimony, in granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands*—in the miracles they wrought in the kingdom of nature—as well as the wonders done by their word, in the greater miracles wrought on

men's minds by the power of divine grace. The Lord was with them, while they were with him, and abundance of good was done.

V. The division which this occasioned in the city (v. 4): *The multitude of the city was divided into two parties, and both active and vigorous*. Among the rulers and persons of rank, and among the common people, there were some that held with the unbelieving Jews, and others that held with the apostles. Barnabas is here reckoned an apostle, though not one of the twelve, nor called in the extraordinary manner that Paul was, because set apart by special designation of the Holy Ghost to the service of the Gentiles. It seems, this business of the preaching of the gospel was so universally taken notice of with concern that every person, even of the multitude of the city, was either for it or against it; none stood neuter. "Either for us or for our adversaries, for God or Baal, for Christ or Beelzebub." 1. We may here see the meaning of Christ's prediction that he came not to send peace upon earth, but rather division, Luke xii. 51—53. If all would have given in unanimously into his measures, there would have been universal concord; and, could men have agreed in this, there would have been no dangerous discord nor disagreement in other things; but, disagreeing here, the breach was wide as the sea. Yet the apostles must not be blamed for coming to Iconium, although before they came the city was united, and now it was divided; for it is better that part of the city go to heaven than all to hell. 2. We may here take the measures of our expectations; let us not think it strange if the preaching of the gospel occasion division, nor be offended at it; it is better to be reproached and persecuted as dividers for swimming against the stream than yield ourselves to be carried down the stream that leads to destruction. Let us hold with the apostles, and not fear those that hold with the Jews.

VI. The attempt made upon the apostles by their enemies. Their evil affection against them broke out at length into violent outrages, v. 5. Observe, 1. Who the plotters were: *Both the Gentiles and the Jews, with their rulers*. The Gentiles and Jews were at enmity with one another, and yet united against Christians, like Herod and Pilate, Sadducees and Pharisees, against Christ; and like Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, of old, against Israel. If the church's enemies can thus unite for its destruction, shall not its friends, laying aside all personal feuds, unite for its preservation? 2. What the plot was. Having now got the rulers on their side, they doubted not but to carry their point, and their design was to use the apostles despitefully, to expose them to disgrace, and then to stone them, to put them to death; and thus they hoped to sink their cause. They aimed to take away both their reputation and their life, and this was all they had



to lose which men could take from them, for they had neither lands nor goods.

VII. The deliverance of the apostles out of the hands of those *wicked and unreasonable men*, v. 6, 7. They got away, upon notice given them of the design against them, or the beginning of the attempt upon them, of which they were soon aware, and they made an honourable retreat (for it was not an inglorious flight) to *Lystra and Derbe*; and there, 1. They found safety. Their persecutors in Iconium were for the present satisfied that they were thrust out of their borders, and pursued them no further. God has shelters for his people in a storm; nay, he is, and will be, himself their hiding place. 2. They found work, and this was what they went for. When the door of opportunity was shut against them at Iconium, it was opened at *Lystra and Derbe*. To these cities they went, and there, and *in the region that lieth round about, they preached the gospel*. In times of persecution ministers may see cause to quit the spot, when yet they do not quit the work.

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: 9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, 10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. 11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. 14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, 15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: 16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless he left not himself without

witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. 18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

In these verses we have,

I. A miraculous cure wrought by Paul at Lystra upon a cripple that had been lame from his birth, such a one as was miraculously cured by Peter and John, *ch. iii.* 2. That introduced the gospel among the Jews, this among the Gentiles; both that and this were designed to represent the impotency of all the children of men in spiritual things: they are lame from their birth, till the grace of God puts strength into them; for it was when we were yet *without strength* that *Christ died for the ungodly*, Rom. v. 6. Observe here, 1. The deplorable case of the poor cripple (v. 8): He was *impotent in his feet, disabled* (so the word is) to such a degree that it was impossible he should set his foot to the ground, to lay any stress upon it. It was well known that he had been *so from his mother's womb*, and that he *never had walked*, nor could *stand up*. We should take occasion hence to thank God for the use of our limbs; and those who are deprived of it may observe that their case is not singular. 2. The expectation that was raised in him of a cure (v. 9): He heard Paul preach, and, it is likely, was much affected with what he heard, believed that the message was from heaven, and that the messengers, having their commission thence, had a divine power going along with them, and were therefore able to cure him of his lameness. This Paul was aware of, by the spirit of discerning that he had, and perhaps the aspect of his countenance did in part witness for him: *Paul perceived that he had faith to be healed*; desired it, hoped for it, had such a thing in his thoughts, which it does not appear that the lame man Peter healed had, for he expected no more than an *alms*. There was *not found such great faith in Israel* as was among the Gentiles, Matt. viii. 10. 3. The cure wrought: *Paul, perceiving that he had faith to be healed, brought the word and healed him*, Ps. cvii. 20. Note, God will not disappoint the desires that are of his own kindling, nor the hopes of his own raising. Paul spoke to him with a loud voice, either because he was at some distance, or to show that the true miracles, wrought by the power of Christ, were far unlike the lying wonders wrought by deceivers, *that peeped, and muttered, and whispered*, Isa. viii. 19. God saith, *I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth*, Isa. xlv. 19. Paul spoke to him with a loud voice, that the people about might take notice, and have their expectations raised of the effect. It does not



appear that this cripple was a beggar; it is said (v. 8) *that he sat*, not that he sat begging. But we may imagine how melancholy it was to him to see other people walking about him, and himself disabled; and therefore how welcome Paul's word was to him, "*Stand upright on thy feet*; help thyself, and God shall help thee; try whether thou hast strength, and thou shalt find that thou hast." Some copies read it, *I say unto thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Stand upright on thy feet*. It is certain that this is implied, and very probably was expressed, by Paul, and *power went along with this word*; for presently *he leaped and walked*, leaped up from the place where he sat, and not only *stood upright*, but to show that he was perfectly cured, and that immediately, he walked to and fro before them all. Herein the scripture was fulfilled, that when *the wilderness of the Gentile world is made to blossom as the rose then shall the lame man leap as a hart*, Isa. xxxv. 1, 6. Those that by the grace of God are cured of their spiritual lameness must show it by leaping with a holy exultation and walking in a holy conversation.

II. The impression which this cure made upon the people: they were amazed at it, had never seen nor heard the like, and fell into an ecstasy of wonder. Paul and Barnabas were strangers, exiles, refugees, in their country; every thing concurred to make them mean and despicable: yet the working of this one miracle was enough to make them in the eyes of this people truly great and honourable, though the multitude of Christ's miracles could not screen him from the utmost contempt among the Jews. We find here, 1. The people take them for gods (v. 11): *They lifted up their voices* with an air of triumph, saying in their own language (for it was the common people that said it), *in the speech of Lycaonia*, which was a dialect of the Greek, *The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men*. They imagined that Paul and Barnabas had dropped down to them out of the clouds, and that they were some divine powers, no less than gods, though in the likeness of men. This notion of the thing agreed well enough with the pagan theology, and the fabulous account they had of the visits which their gods made to this lower world; and proud enough they were to think that they should have a visit made to them. They carried this notion so far here that they pretended to tell which of their gods they were, according to the ideas their poets had given them of the gods (v. 12): *They called Barnabas Jupiter*; for, if they will have him to be a god, it is as easy to make him the prince of their gods as not. It is probable that he was the senior, and the more portly comely man, that had something of majesty in his countenance. And *Paul they called Mercury*, who was the messenger of the gods, that was sent on their errands; for Paul, though he had not the appearance that

Barnabas had, was *the chief speaker*, and had a greater command of language, and perhaps appeared to have something mercurial in his temper and genius. *Jupiter* used to take *Mercury* along with him, they said, and, if he make a visit to their city, they will suppose he does so now. 2. The priest thereupon prepares *to do sacrifice to them*, v. 13. The temple of Jupiter was, it seems, before the gate of their city, as its protector and guardian; and the priest of that idol and temple, hearing the people cry out thus, took the hint presently, and thought it was time for him to bestir himself to do his duty: many a costly sacrifice he had offered to the image of Jupiter, but if Jupiter be among them *himself—in propria persona*, it concerns him to do him the utmost honours imaginable; and the people are ready to join with him in it. See how easily vain minds are carried away with a popular outcry. If the crowd give a shout, Here is Jupiter, the priest of Jupiter takes the first hint, and offers his service immediately. When Christ, the Son of God, came down, and appeared in the likeness of men, and did many, very many miracles, yet they were so far from doing sacrifice to him that they made him a sacrifice to their pride and malice: *He was in the world, and the world knew him not; he came to his own, and his own received him not*; but Paul and Barnabas, upon the working of one miracle, are immediately deified. The same power of the god of this world which prejudices the carnal mind against truth makes errors and mistakes to find easy admission; and both ways his turn is served. *They brought oxen, to be sacrificed to them, and garlands, with which to crown the sacrifices*. These garlands were made up of flowers and ribbons; and they gilded the horns of the oxen they sacrificed.

Victimæ ad supplicium saginantur, hostiæ ad pœnam coronantur.  
So beasts for sacrifice do feed,  
First to be crown'd, and then to bleed.  
So Octavius in Minutius Felix.

III. Paul and Barnabas protest against this undue respect paid them, and with much ado prevent it. Many of the heathen emperors called themselves *gods*, and took a pride in having divine honours paid them: but Christ's ministers, though real benefactors to mankind, while these tyrants only pretended to be so, refused those honours when they were tendered. Whose successor therefore he is who *sits in the temple of God*, and shows that *he is god* (2 Thess. ii. 4), and who is adored as *our lord god*, the pope, it is easy to say. Observe,

1. The holy indignation which Paul and Barnabas conceived at this: *When they heard this, they rent their clothes*. We do not find that they rent their clothes when the people vilified them, and spoke of stoning them; they could bear this without disturbance: but when they deified them, and spoke of worshipping them, they could not bear it, but rent their clothes, as being more concerned for God's honour than their own.

2. The pains they took to prevent it. They did not connive at it, nor say, "If people will be deceived, let them be deceived," much less suggest to themselves and one another that it might contribute both to the safety of their persons and the success of their ministry if they suffered the people to continue in this mistake, and so they might make a good hand of an ill thing. No, God's truth needs not the service of man's lie. Christ had put honour enough upon them in making them apostles, they needed not assume either the honour of princes or the honour of gods; they appeared with much more magnificent titles when they were called the *ambassadors of Christ*, and the *stewards of the mysteries of God*, than when they were called Jupiter and Mercury. Let us see how they prevented it.

(1.) *They ran in among the people*, as soon as they heard of it, and would not so much as stay awhile to see what the people would do. Their running in, like servants, among the people, showed that they were far from looking upon themselves as gods, or taking state upon them; they did not stand still, expecting honours to be done them, but plainly declined them by thrusting themselves into the crowd. They ran in, as men in earnest, with as much concern as Aaron ran in *between the living and the dead*, when the plague was begun.

(2.) They reasoned with them, *crying out*, that all might hear, "*Sirs, why do you these things? Why do you go about to make gods of us? It is the most absurd thing you can do; for,*

[1.] "Our nature will not admit it: *We also are men of like passions with you*" ὁμοιοπαθεῖς: it is the same word that is used concerning Elias, Jam. v. 17, where we render it, *subject to like passions as we are*. "We are men, and therefore you wrong yourselves if you expect that from us which is to be had in God only; and you wrong God if you give that honour to us, or to any other man, which is to be given to God only. We not only have such bodies as you see, but *are of like passions with you*, have *hearts fashioned like as other men* (Ps. xxxiii. 15); for, *as in water face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man*, Prov. xxvii. 19. We are naturally subject to the same infirmities of the human nature, and liable to the same calamities of the human life; not only men, but sinful men and suffering men, and therefore will not be deified.

[2.] "Our doctrine is directly against it. Must we be added to the number of your gods whose business it is to abolish the gods you have? *We preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God*. If we should suffer this, we should confirm you in that which it is our business to convert you from:" and so they take this occasion to show them how just and necessary it was that they should *turn to God from idols*,

1 Thess. i. 9. When they preached to the Jews, who hated idolatry, they had nothing to do but to preach the grace of God in Christ, and needed not, as the prophets in dealing with their fathers, to preach against idolatry: but, when they had to do with the Gentiles, they must rectify their mistakes in natural religion, and bring them off from the gross corruptions of that. See here what they preached to the Gentiles.

*First*, That the gods which they and their fathers worshipped, and all the ceremonies of their worship of them, were *vanities*, idle things, unreasonable, unprofitable, which no rational account could be given of, nor any real advantage gained from. Idols are often called vanities in the Old Testament, Deut. xxxii. 21; 1 Kings x. 13; Jer. xiv. 22. *An idol is nothing in the world* (1 Cor. viii. 4): it is not at all what it is pretended to be, it is a cheat, it is a counterfeit; it deceives those that trust to it and expect relief from it. Therefore *turn from these vanities*, turn from them with abhorrence and detestation, as Ephraim did (Hos. xiv. 8): "*What have I to do any more with idols?*" I will never again be thus imposed upon."

*Secondly*, That the God to whom they would have them *turn is the living God*. They had hitherto worshipped dead images, that were utterly unable to help them (Isa. lxiv. 9), or (as they now attempted) dying men, that would soon be disabled to help them; but now they are persuaded to worship a living God, who has life in himself, and life for us, and lives for evermore.

*Thirdly*, That this God is the creator of the world, the fountain of all being and power: "*He made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things therein*, even those things which you worship as gods, so that he is *the God of your gods*. You worship gods which you made, the creatures of your own fancy, and the work of your own hands. We call you to worship *the God that made you and all the world*; worship the true God, and cheat not yourselves with pretenders; worship the Sovereign Lord of all, and disparage not yourselves in bowing down to his creatures and subjects."

*Fourthly*, That the world owed it to his patience that he had not destroyed them long ere this for their idolatry (v. 16): *In times past*, for many ages, unto this day, *he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*. These idolaters, that were called from the service of other gods, might think, "Have we not served these gods hitherto, and our fathers before us, time out of mind; and why may we not as well go on to serve them still?"—No, your serving them was a trial of God's patience, and it was a miracle of mercy that you were not cut off for it. But, though he did not destroy you for it while you were in ignorance, and knew no better (ch. xvii. 30), yet now that he has sent his gospel into the world, and by it has made a clear discovery of



himself and his will to *all nations*, and not to the Jews only, if you still continue in your idolatry he will not bear with you as he has done. All the nations that had not the benefit of divine revelation, that is, all but the Jews, *he suffered to walk in their own ways*, for they had nothing to check them, or control them, but their own consciences, their own thoughts (Rom. ii. 15), no scriptures, no prophets; and then they were the more excusable if they mistook their way: but now that God has sent a revelation into the world which is to be published to *all nations* the case is altered. We may understand it as a judgment upon all nations that *God suffered them to walk in their own ways, gave them up to their own hearts' lusts*; but now the time is come when *the veil of the covering spread over all nations should be taken off* (Isa. xxv. 7), and now you will no longer be excused in these vanities, but must turn from them. Note, 1. God's patience with us hitherto should lead us to repentance, and not encourage us to presume upon the continuance of it, while we continue to provoke him. 2. Our having done ill while we were in ignorance will not bear us out in doing ill when we are better taught.

*Fifthly*, That even when they were not under the direction and correction of the word of God, yet they might have known, and should have known, to do better by the works of God, v. 17. Though the Gentiles had not the *statutes and judgments* that the Jews had to witness for God against all pretenders, no tables of testimony or tabernacle of testimony, yet *he left not himself without witness*; besides the witness for God within them (the dictates of natural conscience), they had *witnesses* for God round about them—the bounty of common providence. Their having no scriptures did in part excuse them, and therefore God did not destroy them for their idolatry, as he did the Jewish nation. This however did not wholly excuse them, but that notwithstanding this they were highly criminal and deeply guilty before God; for there were other *witnesses* for God, sufficient to inform them that he and he only is to be worshipped, and that to him they owed all their services from whom they received all their comforts, and therefore that they were guilty of the highest injustice and ingratitude imaginable, in alienating them from him. God, having *not left himself without witness*, has not left us without a guide, and so has left us without excuse; for whatever is a witness for God is a witness against us, if we give that glory to any other which is due to him only. 1. The bounties of common providence witness to us that there is a God, for they are all dispensed wisely and with design. The *rain and fruitful seasons* could not come by chance, nor are there *any of the vanities of the heathen that can give rain*, neither can the heavens of themselves give showers, Jer. xiv. 22. All the powers of nature witness to us

a sovereign power in the God of nature, from whom they are derived, and on whom they depend. It is not the heaven that gives us rain, but God that gives us rain from heaven, he is the Father of the rain, Job xxxviii. 28. 2. The benefits we have by these bounties witness to us that we ought to make our acknowledgments not to the creatures who are made serviceable to us, but to the Creator who makes them so. *He left not himself without witness, in that he did good*. God seems to reckon the instances of his *goodness* to be more pregnant, cogent proofs of his title to our homage and adoration than the evidences of his *greatness*; for his goodness is his glory. *The earth is full of his goodness; his tender mercies are over all his works*; and therefore *they praise him*, Ps. cxlv. 9, 10. God does us good, in preserving to us his air to breathe in, his ground to go upon, the light of his sun to see by; but, because the most sensible instance of the goodness of Providence to each of us in particular is that of the daily provision made by it of meat and drink for us, the apostle chooses to insist upon that, and shows how God does us good, (1.) In preparing it for us, and that by a long train of causes which depend upon him as the first cause: *The heavens hear the earth; the earth hears the corn, and wine, and oil; and they hear Jezreel*. Hos. ii. 21, 22. He does us good in giving us rain from heaven,—rain for us to drink, for if there were no rain there would be no springs of water and we should soon die for thirst,—rain for our land to drink, for our meat as well as drink we have from the rain; in giving us this, he *gives us fruitful seasons*. *If the heavens be as iron, the earth will soon be as brass*, Lev. xxvi. 19. *This is the river of God which greatly enriches the earth, and by it God prepares us corn*, Ps. lxxv. 9—13. Of all the common operations of providence, the heathen chose to form their notion of the supreme God by that which bespeaks terror, and is proper to strike an awe of him upon us, and this was *the thunder*; and therefore they called Jupiter *the thunderer*, and represented him with a thunderbolt in his hand; and it appears by Ps. xxix. 3 that this ought not to be overlooked; but the apostle here, to engage us to worship God, sets before us his beneficence, that we may have good thoughts of him in every thing wherein we have to do with him—may love him and delight in him, as one that does good, does good to us, does good to all, in giving *rain from heaven and fruitful seasons*; and if at any time rain be withheld, or the seasons be unfruitful, we may thank ourselves; it is our sin that *turns away these good things from us* which were coming to us, and stops the current of God's favours. (2.) In giving us the comforts of it. It is he that *fills our hearts with food and gladness*. God is *rich in mercy to all* (Rom. x. 12): he *gives us richly all things to enjoy* (1 Tim. vi. 17), is not only a benefactor, but a bountiful one; not only



*gives us the things we need, but gives us to enjoy them* (Eccl. ii. 24): *He fills our hearts with food*, that is, he gives us food to our hearts' content, or according to our hearts' desire; not merely for necessity, but plenty, dainty, and variety. Even those nations that had lost the knowledge of him, and worshipped other gods, yet he *filled their houses, filled their mouths, filled their bellies* (Job xxii. 18; Ps. xvii. 14) *with good things*. The Gentiles that *lived without God in the world*, yet lived upon God, which Christ urges as a reason why we should *do good to those that hate us*, Matt. v. 44, 45. Those heathen had *their hearts filled with food*; this was their felicity and satisfaction, they desired no more; but *these things will not fill the soul* (Ezek. vii. 19), nor will those that know how to value their own souls be satisfied with them; but the apostles put themselves in as sharers in the divine beneficence. We must all own that God fills our hearts with food and gladness; not only *food*, that we may live, but *gladness*, that we may live cheerfully; to him we owe it that we do not *all our days eat in sorrow*. Note, We must thank God, not only for our food, but for our gladness—that he gives us leave to be cheerful, cause to be cheerful, and hearts to be cheerful. And, if *our hearts be filled with food and gladness*, they ought to be filled with love and thankfulness, and enlarged in duty and obedience, Deut. viii. 10; xviii. 47.

*Lastly*, The success of this prohibition which the apostles gave to the people (v. 18): By these sayings, with much ado, they *restrained the people from doing sacrifice to them*, so strongly were these idolaters set upon their idolatry. It was not enough for the apostles to refuse to be deified (this would be construed only a pang of modesty), but they resented it, they showed the people the evil of it, and all little enough, for they could *scarcely* restrain them from it, and some of them were ready to blame the priest, that he did not go on with his business notwithstanding. We may see here what gave rise to the pagan idolatry; it was terminating those regards in the instruments of our comfort which should have passed through them to the Author. Paul and Barnabas had cured a cripple, and therefore the people deified them, instead of glorifying God for giving them such power, which should make us very cautious that we do not give that honour to another, or take it to ourselves, which is due to God only.

19 And there came thither *certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium*, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead. 20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next

day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch. 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. 23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. 24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: 26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. 27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. 28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

We have here a further account of the services and sufferings of Paul and Barnabas.

I. How Paul was stoned and left for dead, but miraculously came to himself again, v. 19, 20. They fell upon Paul rather than Barnabas, because Paul, being the chief speaker, galled and vexed them more than Barnabas did. Now observe here, 1. How the people were incensed against Paul; not by any injury they pretended he had done them (if they took it for an affront that he would not let them misplace divine honours upon him, when they considered themselves they would easily forgive him that wrong), but *there came certain Jews from Antioch*, hearing, it is likely, and vexed to hear, what respect was shown to Paul and Barnabas at Lystra; and they incensed the people against them, as factious, seditious, dangerous persons, not fit to be harboured. See how restless the rage of the Jews was against the gospel of Christ; they could not bear that it should have footing any where. 2. To what degree they were incensed by these barbarous Jews: they were irritated to such a degree that the mob rose and *stoned Paul*, not by a judicial sentence, but in a popular tumult they threw stones at him, with which they knocked him down, and then *drew him out of the city*, as one not fit to live in it, or drew him out upon a sledge, or in a cart, to bury



him, *supposing he had been dead*. So strong is the bias of the corrupt and carnal heart to that which is evil, even in contrary extremes, that, as it is with great difficulty that men are restrained from evil on one side, so it is with great ease that they are persuaded to evil on the other side. See how fickle and mutable the minds of carnal worldly people are, that do not know and consider things. Those that but the other day would have treated the apostles as more than men now treat them as worse than brutes, as the worst of men, as the worst of malefactors. To-day *Hosanna*, to-morrow *Crucify*; to-day sacrificed to, to-morrow sacrificed. We have an instance of a change the other way, *ch. xxviii. This man is a murderer, v. 4*; no doubt *he is a god, v. 6*. Popular breath turns like the wind. If Paul would have been Mercury, he might have been enthroned, nay, he might have been enshrined; but, if he will be a faithful minister of Christ, he shall be stoned, and thrown out of the city. Thus those who easily submit to strong delusions hate to receive the truth in the love of it. 3. How he was delivered by the power of God: When he was *drawn out of the city, the disciples stood round about him, v. 20*. It seems there were some here at Lystra that became disciples, that found the mean between deifying the apostles and rejecting them; and even these new converts had courage to own Paul when he was thus run down, though they had reason enough to fear that the same that stoned him would stone them for owning him. They stood round about him, as a guard to him against the further outrage of the people—stood about him to see whether he were alive or dead; and all of a sudden *he rose up*. Though he was not dead, yet he was ill crushed and bruised, no doubt, and fainted away; he was in a *deliquium*, so that it was not without a miracle that he came so soon to himself, and was so well as to be able to go into the city. Note, God's faithful servants, though they may be brought within a step of death, and may be looked upon as dead both by friends and enemies, shall not die as long as he has work for them to do. *They are cast down, but not destroyed, 2 Cor. iv. 9*.

II. How they went on with their work, notwithstanding the opposition they met with. All the stones they threw at Paul could not beat him off from his work: *They drew him out of the city (v. 19)*, but, as one that set them at defiance, *he came into the city again*, to show that he did not fear them; *none even of these things move him*. However, their being persecuted here is a known indication to them to seek for opportunities of usefulness elsewhere, and therefore for the present they quit Lystra.

1. They went to break up and sow fresh ground at Derbe. Thither the next day Paul and Barnabas departed, a city not far off; there they preached the gospel, there they

*taught many, v. 21*. And it should seem that Timothy was of that city, and was one of the disciples that now attended Paul, had met him at Antioch and accompanied him in all this circuit; for, with reference to this story, Paul tells him how fully *he had known the afflictions he endured at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11*. Nothing is recorded that happened at Derbe.

2. They returned, and went over their work again, watering what they had sown; and, having staid as long as they thought fit at Derbe, they came back to Lystra, to Iconium, and Antioch, the cities where they had preached, *v. 21*. Now, as we have had a very instructive account of the methods they took in laying the foundation, and beginning the good work, so here we have the like of their building upon that foundation, and carrying on that good work. Let us see what they did,

(1.) They confirmed the souls of the disciples; that is, they inculcated that upon them which was proper to confirm them, *v. 22*. Young converts are apt to waver, and a little thing shocks them. Their old acquaintances beg they will not leave them. Those that they look upon to be wiser than themselves set before them the absurdity, indecency, and danger, of a change. They were allured, by the prospect of preferment, to stick to the traditions of their fathers; they are frightened with the danger of swimming against the stream. All this tempts them to think of making a retreat in time; but the apostles come and tell them that *this is the true grace of God wherein they stand*, and therefore they must stand to it that there is no danger like that of losing their part in Christ, no advantage like that of keeping their hold of him; that, whatever their trials may be, they shall have strength from Christ to pass through them; and, whatever their losses may be, they shall be abundantly recompensed. And this confirms the souls of the disciples; it fortifies their pious resolutions, in the strength of Christ, to adhere to Christ whatever it may cost them. Note, [1.] Those that are converted need to be confirmed; those that are planted need to be rooted. Ministers' work is to establish saints as well as to awaken sinners. *Non minor est virtus quam querere parta tueri—To retain is sometimes as difficult as to acquire*. Those that were instructed in the truth must know the certainty of the things in which they have been instructed; and those that are resolved must be fixed in their resolutions. [2.] True confirmation is confirmation of the soul; it is not binding the body by severe penalties on apostates, but binding the soul. The best ministers can do this only by pressing those things which are proper to bind the soul; it is the grace of God, and nothing less, that can effectually confirm the souls of the disciples, and prevent their apostasy.

(2.) They exhorted them to continue in the

*faith*; or, as it may be read, *they encouraged them*. They told them it was both their duty and interest to persevere; to abide in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. Note, Those that are in the faith are concerned to *continue in the faith*, notwithstanding all the temptations they may be under to desert it, from the smiles or frowns of this world. And it is requisite that they should often be exhorted to do so. Those that are continually surrounded with temptations to apostasy have need to be continually attended with pressing exhortations to perseverance.

(3.) That which they insisted most upon was *that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*. Not only *they must*, but *we must*; it must be counted upon that all who will go to heaven must expect tribulation and persecution in their way thither. But is this the way to *confirm the souls of the disciples*, and to engage them to *continue in the faith*? One would think it would rather shock them, and make them weary. No, as the matter is fairly stated and taken entire, it will help to confirm them, and fix them for Christ. It is true they will meet with tribulation, with much tribulation; that is the worst of it: but then, [1.] It is so appointed. They must undergo it, there is no remedy, the matter is already fixed, and cannot be altered. He that has the sovereign disposal of us has determined it to be our lot that all that *will live godly in Christ Jesus should suffer persecution*; and he that has the sovereign command over us has determined this to be our duty, that all that will be Christ's disciples must *take up their cross*. When we gave up our names to Jesus Christ it was what we agreed to; when we sat down and counted the cost, if we reckoned aright, it was what we counted upon; so that if *tribulation and persecution arise because of the word* it is but what we had notice of before, it must be so: *he performeth the thing that is appointed for us*. The matter is fixed unalterably; and *shall the rock be for us removed out of its place*? [2.] It is the lot of the leaders in Christ's army, as well as of the soldiers. It is not only *you*, but *we*, that (if it be thought a hardship) are subject to it; therefore, as your own sufferings must not be a stumbling-block to you, so neither must ours; see 1 Thess. iii. 3. *Let none be moved by our afflictions, for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto*. As Christ did not put the apostles upon any harder service than what he underwent before them, so neither did the apostles put the ordinary Christians. [3.] It is true we must count upon *much tribulation*, but this is encouraging, that we shall get through it; we shall not be lost and perish in it. It is a Red Sea, but the Lord has opened a way through it, for *the redeemed of the Lord to pass over*. We must go down to trouble, but we shall come up again. [4.] We shall

not only get through it, but get through it *into the kingdom of God*; and the joy and glory of the end will make abundant amends for all the difficulties and hardships we may meet with in the way. It is true *we must go by the cross*, but it is as true that if we keep in the way, and do not turn aside nor turn back, we shall *go to the crown*, and the believing prospect of this will make the tribulation easy and pleasant.

(4.) *They ordained them elders*, or presbyters, *in every church*. Now at this second visit they settled them in some order, formed them into religious societies under the guidance of a settled ministry, and settled that distinction between those that are taught in the word and those that teach. [1.] Every church had its governors or presidents, whose office it was to pray with the members of the church, and to preach to them in their solemn assemblies, to administer all gospel ordinances to them, and to take the oversight of them, *to instruct the ignorant, warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, and convince gain-sayers*. It is requisite that every particular church should have one or more such to preside in it. [2.] Those governors were then elders, that had in their qualification the wisdom and gravity of seniors, and had in their commission the authority and command of seniors: not to make new laws (this is the prerogative of the Prince, the great Lawgiver; the government of the church is an absolute monarchy, and the legislative power entirely in Christ), but to see to the observance and execution of the laws Christ has made; and so far they are to be obeyed and submitted to. [3.] *These elders were ordained*. The qualifications of such as were proposed or proposed themselves (whether the apostles or the people put them up) were judged of by the apostles, as most fit to judge; and they, having devoted themselves, were solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry, and bound to it. [4.] These elders were ordained to them, to the disciples, to their service, for their good. Those that are in the faith have need to be built up in it, and have need of the elders' help therein—the *pastors and teachers*, who are to *edify the body of Christ*.

(5.) *By prayer joined with fasting they commended them to the Lord*, to the Lord Jesus, *on whom they believed*. Note, [1.] Even when persons are brought to believe, and that sincerely, yet ministers' care concerning them is not over; there is need of watching over them still, instructing and admonishing them still; there is still that lacking in their faith which needs to be perfected. [2.] The ministers that take most care of those that believe must after all commend them to the Lord, and put them under the protection and guidance of his grace. *Lord, keep them through thine own name*. To his custody they must commit themselves, and their ministers must commit them. [3.] It is by prayer that they must be commended



to the Lord. Christ, in his prayer (John xvii.), commended his disciples to his Father: *Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me. Father, keep them.* [4.] It is a great encouragement to us, in commending the disciples to the Lord, that we can say, "It is he in whom they believed; we commit to him those who have committed themselves to him, and who know they have believed in one who is able to keep what they and we have committed to him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. [5.] It is good to join fasting with prayer, in token of our humiliation for sin, and in order to add vigour to our prayers. [6.] When we are parting with our friends, the best farewell is to commend them to the Lord, and to leave them with him.

3. They went on preaching the gospel in other places where they had been, but, as it should seem, had not made so many converts as that now at their return they could form them into churches; therefore thither they came to pursue and carry on conversion-work. From Antioch they passed through *Pisidia*, the province in which that Antioch stood; thence they came into the province of *Pamphylia*, the head-city of which was *Perga*, where they had been before (*ch.* xiii. 13), and came thither again to preach the word (*v.* 25), making a second offer, to see if they were now better disposed than they were before to receive the gospel. What success they had there we are not told, but that thence they went down to *Attalia*, a city of *Pamphylia*, on the sea-coast. They staid not long at a place, but wherever they came endeavoured to lay a foundation which might afterwards be built upon, and to sow the seeds which would in time produce a great increase. Now Christ's parables were explained, in which he compared the kingdom of heaven to a little leaven, which in time leavened the whole lump,—to a grain of mustard-seed, which, though very inconsiderable at first, grew to a great tree,—and to the seed which a man sowed in his ground, and it sprang up he knew not how.

III. How they at length came back to Antioch in Syria, whence they had been sent forth upon this expedition. From *Attalia* they came by sea to Antioch, *v.* 26. And we are here told,

1. Why they came thither: because *thence they had been recommended to the grace of God*, and such a value did they put upon a solemn recommendation to the grace of God, though they had themselves a great interest in heaven, that they never thought they could show respect enough to those who had so recommended them. The brethren having recommended them to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled, now that they had fulfilled it they thought they owed them an account of it, that they might help them by their praises, as they had been helped by their prayers.

2. What account they gave them of their

negociation (*v.* 27): They gathered the church together. It is probable that there were more Christians at Antioch than ordinarily met, or could meet, in one place, but on this occasion they called together the *leading men* of them; as the heads of the tribes are often called the *congregation* of Israel, so the ministers and principal members of the church at Antioch are called the *church*. Or perhaps as many of the people as the place would hold came together on this occasion. Or some met at one time, or in one place, and others at another. But when they had called them together, they gave them an account of two things:—(1.) Of the tokens they had had of the divine presence with them in their labours: *They rehearsed all that God had done with them.* They did not tell what they had done (this would have savoured of vain-glory), but what God had done with them and by them. Note, The praise of all the little good we do at any time must be ascribed to God; for it is he that not only worketh in us both to will and to do, but then worketh with us to make what we do successful. God's grace can do any thing without ministers' preaching; but ministers' preaching, even Paul's, can do nothing without God's grace; and the operations of that grace must be acknowledged in the efficacy of the word. (2.) Of the fruit of their labours among the heathen. They told how God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles; had not only ordered them to be invited to the gospel feast, but had inclined the hearts of many of them to accept the invitation. Note, [1.] There is no entering into the kingdom of Christ but by the door of faith; we must firmly believe in Christ, or we have no part in him. [2.] It is God that opens the door of faith, that opens to us the truths we are to believe, opens our hearts to receive them, and makes this a wide door, and an effectual, into the church of Christ. [3.] We have reason to be thankful that God has opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, has both sent them his gospel, which is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith (*Rom.* xvi. 26), and has also given them hearts to entertain the gospel. Thus the gospel was spread, and it shone more and more, and none was able to shut this door which God had opened; not all the powers of hell and earth.

3. How they disposed of themselves for the present: *There they abode a long time with the disciples* (*v.* 28), longer than perhaps at first they intended, not because they feared their enemies, but because they loved their friends, and were loth to part from them.

#### CHAP. XV.

Hitherto we have, with a great deal of pleasure, attended the apostles in their glorious travels for the propagating of the gospel to foreign parts, have seen the bounds of the church enlarged by the accession both of Jews and Gentiles to it; and thanks be to that God who always caused them to triumph. We left them, in the close of the foregoing chapter, reposing themselves at Antioch, and edifying the church there with the rehearsal of their experiences, and it is a pity they should ever be otherwise employed; but in this chapter we find other work (not so pleasant) cut out for them. The Christians and ministers are engaged to

controversy, and those that should have been now busied in enlarging the dominions of the church have as much as they can do to compose the divisions of it; when they should have been making war upon the devil's kingdom they have much ado to keep the peace in Christ's kingdom. Yet this occurrence and the record of it are of great use to the church, both for warning to us to expect such unhappy discords among Christians, and direction to us what method to take for accommodation of them. Here is, 1. A controversy raised at Antioch by the Judaizing teachers, who would have the believing Gentiles brought under the yoke of circumcision and the ceremonial law, ver. 1, 2. 11. A consultation held with the church at Jerusalem about this matter, and the sending of delegates thither for that purpose, which occasioned the starting of the same question there, ver. 3-5. 111. An account of what passed in the synod that was convened upon this occasion ver. 6. What Peter said, ver. 7-11. What Paul and Barnabas discoursed of, ver. 12. And, lastly, what James proposed for the settling of this matter, ver. 13-21. 1V. The result of this debate, and the circular letter that was written to the Gentile converts, directing them how to govern themselves with respect to Jews, ver. 22-29. V. The delivering of this determination to the church at Antioch, and the satisfaction it gave them, ver. 30-35. VI. A second expedition designed by Paul and Barnabas to preach to the Gentiles, in which they quarrelled about their assistant, and separated upon it, one steering one course and the other another, ver. 36-41.

AND certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. 3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice, and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. 4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. 5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

Even when things go on very smoothly and pleasantly in a state or in a church, it is folly to be secure, and to think the mountain stands strong and cannot be moved; some uneasiness or other will arise, which is not foreseen, cannot be prevented, but must be prepared for. If ever there was a heaven upon earth, surely it was in the church at Antioch at this time, when there were so many excellent ministers there, and blessed Paul among them, building up that church in her most holy faith. But here we have their peace disturbed, and differences arising. Here is,

I. A new doctrine started among them, which occasioned this division, obliging the Gentile converts to submit to circumcision and the ceremonial law, v. 1. Many that had

been proselytes to the Jewish religion became Christians; and they would have such as were proselyted to the Christian religion to become Jews.

1. The persons that urged this were *certain men who came down from Judæa*; some think such as had been of the Pharisees (v. 5), or perhaps of those priests who were *obedient to the faith*, ch. vi. 7. They came from Judæa, pretending perhaps to be sent by the apostles at Jerusalem, at least to be countenanced by them. Having a design to spread their notions, they came to Antioch, because that was the head-quarters of those that preached to the Gentiles, and the rendezvous of the Gentile converts; and, if they could but make an interest there, this leaven would soon be diffused to all the churches of the Gentiles. They insinuated themselves into an acquaintance with the brethren, pretended to be very glad that they had embraced the Christian faith, and congratulated them on their conversion; but tell them that *yet one thing they lack*, they must be circumcised. Note, Those that are ever so well taught have need to stand upon their guard that they be not untaught again, or ill taught.

2. The position they laid down, the thesis they gave, was this, that except the Gentiles who turned Christians were *circumcised after the manner of Moses*, and thereby bound themselves to all the observances of the ceremonial law, *they could not be saved*. As to this, (1.) Many of the Jews who embraced the faith of Christ, yet continued very *zealous for the law*, ch. xxi. 20. They knew it was from God and its authority was sacred, valued it for its antiquity, had been bred up in the observance of it, and it is probable had been often devoutly affected in their attendance on these observances; they therefore kept them up after they were by baptism admitted into the Christian church, kept up the distinction of meats, and used the ceremonial purifyings from ceremonial pollutions, attended the temple service, and celebrated the feasts of the Jews. Herein they were connived at, because the prejudices of education are not to be overcome all at once, and in a few years the mistake would be effectually rectified by the destruction of the temple and the total dissolution of the Jewish church, by which the observance of the Mosaic ritual would become utterly impracticable. But it did not suffice them that they were herein indulged themselves, they must have the Gentile converts brought under the same obligations. Note, There is a strange proneness in us to make our own opinion and practice a rule and a law to every body else, to judge of all about us by our standard, and to conclude that because we do well all do wrong that do not just as we do. (2.) Those Jews who believed that Christ was the Messiah, as they could not get clear of their affection to the law, so they could not get



clear of the notions they had of the Messiah, that he should set up a temporal kingdom in favour of the Jewish nation, should make this illustrious and victorious; it was a disappointment to them that there was as yet nothing done towards this in the way they expected. But now that they hear the doctrine of Christ is received among the Gentiles, and his kingdom begins to be set up in the midst of them, if they can but persuade those that embrace Christ to embrace the law of Moses too they hope their point will be gained, the Jewish nation will be made as considerable as they can wish, though in another way; and "Therefore by all means let the brethren be pressed to be *circumcised and keep the law*, and then with our religion our dominion will be extended, and we shall in a little time be able to shake off the Roman yoke; and not only so, but to put it on the necks of our neighbours, and so shall have such a kingdom of the Messiah as we promised ourselves." Note, It is no wonder if those who have wrong notions of the kingdom of Christ take wrong measures for the advancement of it, and such as really tend to the destruction of it, as these do.

(3.) The controversy about the circumcising of the Gentile proselytes had been on foot among the Jews long before this. This is observed by Dr. Whitby out of Josephus. —*Antiquit.* lib. xx. cap. 2. "That when Izates, the son of Helen queen of Adiabene, embraced the Jews' religion, Ananias declared he might do it without circumcision; but Eleazar maintained that it was a great impiety to remain uncircumcised." And when two eminent Gentiles fled to Josephus (as he relates in the history of his own life) "the zealots among the Jews were urgent for their circumcision; but Josephus dissuaded them from insisting upon it." Such has been the difference in all ages between bigotry and moderation. (4.) It is observable what a mighty stress they laid upon it; they do not only say, "*You ought to be circumcised after the manner of Moses*, and it will be good service to the kingdom of the Messiah if you be; it will best accommodate matters between you and the Jewish converts, and we shall take it very kindly if you will, and shall converse the more familiarly with you;" but, "*Except you be circumcised you cannot be saved*. If you be not herein of our mind and way, you will never go to heaven, and therefore of course you must go to hell." Note, It is common for proud impostors to enforce their own inventions under pain of damnation; and to tell people that unless they believe just as they would have them believe, and do just as they would have them do, they cannot be saved, it is impossible they should; not only their case is hazardous, but it is desperate. Thus the Jews tell their brethren that except they be of their church, and come into their communion, and conform to the ceremonies of their wor-

ship, though otherwise good men and believers in Christ, yet they cannot be saved; salvation itself cannot save them. None are in Christ but those that are within their pale. We ought to see ourselves well warranted by the word of God before we say, "Except you do so and so, you cannot be saved."

II. The opposition which Paul and Barnabas gave to this schismatical notion, which engrossed salvation to the Jews, now that Christ had opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles (*v. 2*): *They had no small dissension and disputation with them*. They would by no means yield to this doctrine, but appeared and argued publicly against it. 1. As faithful servants of Christ, they would not see his truths betrayed. They knew that Christ came to free us from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and to take down that wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles and unite them both in himself; and therefore could not bear to hear of circumcising the Gentile converts, when their instructions were only to baptize them. The Jews would unite with the Gentiles, that is, they would have them to conform in every thing to their rites, and then, and not till then, they will look upon them as their brethren; and no thanks to them. But, this not being the way in which Christ designed to unite them, it is not to be admitted. 2. As spiritual fathers to the Gentile converts, they would not see their liberties encroached upon. They had told the Gentiles that if they believed in Jesus Christ they should be saved; and now to be told that this was not enough to save them, except they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, this was such a discouragement to them at setting out, and would be such a stumbling-block in their way, as might almost tempt them to think of returning into Egypt again; and therefore the apostles set themselves against it.

III. The expedient pitched upon for preventing the mischief of this dangerous notion, and silencing those that vented it, as well as quieting the minds of the people with reference to it. They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and some others of their number, should *go to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders*, concerning this doubt. Not that the church at Antioch had any doubt concerning it: they knew the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; but they sent the case to Jerusalem, 1. Because those who taught this doctrine came from Jerusalem, and pretended to have directions from the apostles there to urge circumcision upon the Gentile converts; it was therefore very proper to send to Jerusalem about it, to know if they had any such direction from the church there. And it was soon found to be all wrong, which yet pretended to be of apostolical right. It was true that these *went out from them* (*v. 24*), but they never had any such orders from them. 2. Because those who were taught

this doctrine would be the better confirmed in their opposition to it, and in the less danger of being shocked and disturbed by it, if they were sure that *the apostles and elders at Jerusalem* (which was the Christian church that of all others retained the most affection to the law of Moses) were against it; and, if they could but have this under their hands, it would be the likeliest means to silence and shame these incendiaries, who had pretended to have it from them. 3. Because the apostles at Jerusalem were fittest to be consulted in a point not yet fully settled; and being most eminent for an infallible spirit, peculiar to them as apostles, their decision would be likely to end the controversy. It was owing to the subtlety and malice of the great enemy of the church's peace (as it appears by Paul's frequent complaints of these *judaizing teachers*, these *false apostles*, these *deceitful workers*, these *enemies of the cross of Christ*), that it had not this effect.

IV. Their journey to Jerusalem upon this errand, v. 3. Where we find, 1. That they were honoured at parting: *They were brought on their way by the church*, which was then much used as a token of respect to useful men, and is directed to be done *after a godly sort*, 3 John 6. Thus the church showed their favour to those who witnessed against these encroachments on the liberties of the Gentile converts, and stood up for them. 2. That they did good as they went along. They were men that would not lose time, and therefore visited the churches by the way; they passed through Phenice and Samaria, and as they went *declared the conversion of the Gentiles*, and what wonderful success the gospel had had among them, which *caused great joy to all the brethren*. Note, The progress of the gospel is and ought to be a matter of great joy. *All the brethren*, the faithful brethren in Christ's family, rejoice when more are born into the family; for the family will be never the poorer for the multitude of its children. In Christ and heaven there is portion enough, and inheritance enough for them all.

V. Their hearty welcome at Jerusalem, v. 4. 1. The good entertainment their friends gave them: *They were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders*, were embraced as brethren, and had audience as messengers of the church at Antioch; they received them with all possible expressions of love and friendship. 2. The good entertainment they gave their friends: *They declared all things that God had done with them*, gave them an account of the success of their ministry among the Gentiles, not what they had done, but *what God had done with them*, what he had by his grace in them enabled them to do, and what he had by his grace in their hearers enabled them to receive. As they went they had planted, as they came back they had watered; but in both they were ready to own it was God that gave the

increase. Note, It is a great honour to be employed for God, to be workers for him: for those that are so have him a worker with them, and he must have all the glory.

VI. The opposition they met with from the same party at Jerusalem, v. 5. When Barnabas and Paul gave an account of the multitude of the Gentiles, and of the great harvest of souls gathered in to Christ there, and all about them congratulated them upon it, *there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees*, who received the tidings very coldly, and, though they believed in Christ, yet were not satisfied in the admission of these converts, but thought it was needful to circumcise them. Observe here, 1. That those who have been most prejudiced against the gospel yet have been captivated by it; so mighty has it been through God to the pulling down of strong-holds. When Christ was here upon earth, few or none of the rulers and of the Pharisees believed on him; but now there are those of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, and many of them, we hope, in sincerity. 2. That it is very hard for men suddenly to get clear of their prejudices: those that had been Pharisees, even after they became Christians, retained some of the old leaven. All did not so, witness Paul, but some did; and they had such a jealousy for the ceremonial law, and such a dislike of the Gentiles, that they could not admit the Gentiles into communion with them, unless they would be circumcised, and thereby engage themselves to keep the law of Moses. This was, in their opinion, needful; and for their parts they would not converse with them unless they submitted to it.

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. 7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. 12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to



Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. 19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

We have here a council called, not by writ, but by consent, on this occasion (v. 6): *The apostles and presbyters came together, to consider of this matter.* They did not give their judgment separately, but came together to do it, that they might hear one another's sense in this matter; for in the multitude of counsellors there is safety and satisfaction. They did not give their judgment rashly, but considered of this matter. Though they were clear concerning it in their own minds, yet they would take time to consider of it, and to hear what might be said by the adverse party. Nor did the apostles give their judgment concerning it without the elders, the inferior ministers, to whom they thus condescended, and on whom they thus put an honour. Those that are most eminent in gifts and graces, and are in the most exalted stations in the church, ought to show respect to their juniors and inferiors; for, though *days should speak, yet there is a spirit in man*, Job xxxii. 7, 8. Here is a direction to the pastors of the churches, when difficulties arise, to come together in solemn meetings for mutual advice and encouragement, that they may know one another's mind, and

strengthen one another's hands, and may act in concert. Now here we have,

1. Peter's speech in this synod. He did not in the least pretend to any primacy or headship in this synod. He was not master of this assembly, nor so much as chairman or moderator, *pro hac vice—on this occasion*; for we do not find that either he spoke first, to open the synod (*there having been much disputing before he rose up*), nor that he spoke last, to sum up the cause and collect the suffrages; but he was a faithful, prudent, zealous member of this assembly, and offered that which was very much to the purpose, and which would come better from him than from another, because he had himself been the first that preached the gospel to the Gentiles. *There had been much disputing, pro and con*, upon this question, and liberty of speech allowed, as ought to be in such cases; those of the sect of the Pharisees were some of them present, and allowed to say what they could in defence of those of their opinion at Antioch, which probably was answered by some of the elders; such questions ought to be fairly disputed before they are decided. When both sides had been heard, *Peter rose up*, and addressed himself to the assembly, *Men and brethren*, as did James afterwards, v. 13. And here,

1. He put them in mind of the call and commission he had some time ago to *preach the gospel to the Gentiles*; he wondered there should be any difficulty made of a matter already settled: *You know that ἀπ' ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων—from the beginning of the days of the gospel*, many years ago, *God made choice among us apostles of one to preach the gospel to the Gentiles*, and I was the person chosen, *that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word, and believe*, v. 7. You know I was questioned about it and cleared myself to universal satisfaction; every body rejoiced that *God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life*, and nobody said a word of circumcising them, nor was there any thought of such a thing. See ch. xi. 18. Why should the Gentiles who hear the word of the gospel by Paul's mouth be compelled to submit to circumcision, any more than those that heard it by my mouth? Or why should the terms of their admission now be made harder than they were then?"

2. He puts them in mind how remarkably God owned him in preaching to the Gentiles, and gave testimony to their sincerity in embracing the Christian faith (v. 8): *God, who knows the hearts*, and therefore is able to judge infallibly of men, *bore them witness that they were his indeed*, by *giving them the Holy Ghost*; not only the graces and comforts, but the extraordinary miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, *even as he did unto us apostles.*" See ch. xi. 15—17. Note, *The Lord knows those that are his*, for he knows men's hearts; and we are as our hearts are. Those to whom God gives the Holy Ghost.

he thereby bears witness to that they are his; hence we are said to be sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise—marked for God. God had bidden the Gentiles welcome to the privilege of communion with him, without requiring them to be circumcised and to keep the law; and therefore shall not we admit them into communion with us but upon those terms? “God has put no difference between us and them (v. 9); they, though Gentiles, are as welcome to the grace of Christ and the throne of grace as we Jews are; why then should we set them at a distance, as if we were holier than they?” Isa. lxxv. 5. Note, We ought not to make any conditions of our brethren’s acceptance with us but such as God has made the conditions of their acceptance with him, Rom. xiv. 3. Now the Gentiles were fitted for communion with God, in *having their hearts purified by faith*, and that faith God’s own work in them; and therefore why should we think them unfit for communion with us, unless they will submit to the ceremonial purifying enjoined by the law to us? Note, (1.) *By faith the heart is purified*; we are not only justified, and conscience purified, but the work of sanctification is begun and carried on. (2.) Those that have their hearts purified by faith are therein made so nearly to resemble one another, that, whatever difference there may be between them, no account is to be made of it; for the faith of all the saints is alike precious, and has like precious effects (2 Peter i. 1), and those that by it are united to Christ are so to look upon themselves as joined to one another as that all distinctions, even that between Jew and Gentile, are merged and swallowed up in it.

3. He sharply reproves those teachers (some of whom, it is likely, were present) who went about to bring the Gentiles under the obligation of the law of Moses, v. 10. The thing is so plain that he cannot forbear speaking of it with some warmth: “Now therefore, since God has owned them for his, why tempt you God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, of the believing Gentiles and their children” (for circumcision was a yoke upon their infant seed, who are here reckoned among the disciples), “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? Here he shows that in this attempt, (1.) They offered a very great affront to God: “You tempt him, by calling that in question which he has already settled and determined by no less an indication than that of the gift of the Holy Ghost; you do, in effect, ask, ‘Did he know what he did? Or was he in earnest in it? Or will he abide by his own act?’ Will you try whether God, who designed the ceremonial law for the people of the Jews only, will now, in its last ages, bring the Gentiles too under the obligation of it, to gratify you?” Those tempt God who prescribe to him, and say that people cannot be saved but upon such and such terms, which God never appointed; as if the God of salvation must

come into their measures. (2.) They offered a very great wrong to the disciples: Christ came to proclaim *liberty to the captives*, and they go about to enslave those whom he has made free. See Neh. v. 8. The ceremonial law was a heavy yoke; they and their fathers found it difficult to be borne, so numerous, so various, so pompous, were the institutions of it. The distinction of meats was a heavy yoke, not only as it rendered conversation less pleasant, but as it embarrassed conscience with endless scruples. The ado that was made about even the unavoidable touch of a grave or a dead body, the pollution contracted by it, and the many rules about purifying from that pollution, were a heavy burden. This yoke Christ came to ease us of, and called those that were *weary and heavy laden* under it to come and take his yoke upon them, his easy yoke. Now for these teachers to go about to lay that yoke upon the neck of the Gentiles from which he came to free even the Jews was the greatest injury imaginable to them.

4. Whereas the Jewish teachers had urged that circumcision was necessary to salvation, Peter shows it was so far from being so that both Jews and Gentiles were to be saved purely through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in no other way (v. 11): *We believe to be saved through that grace only*; πιστεύομεν σωθῆναι—*We hope to be saved*; or, *We believe unto salvation in the same manner as they*—καθ’ ὃν τρόπον ἐκείνοι. “We that are circumcised believe to salvation, and so do those that are uncircumcised; and, as our circumcision will be no advantage to us, so their uncircumcision will be no disadvantage to them; for we must depend upon the grace of Christ for salvation, and must apply that grace by faith, as well as they. There is not one way of salvation for the Jews and another for the Gentiles; neither circumcision avails any thing nor uncircumcision (that is neither here nor there), but faith which works by love, Gal. v. 6. Why should we burden them with the law of Moses, as necessary to their salvation, when it is not that, but the gospel of Christ, that is necessary both to our salvation and theirs?”

II. An account of what Barnabas and Paul said in this synod, which did not need to be related, for they only gave in a narrative of what was recorded in the foregoing chapters, *what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them*, v. 12. This they had given in to the church at Antioch (ch. xiv. 27), to their brethren by the way (ch. xv. 3), and now again to the synod; and it was very proper to be given in here. That which was contended for was that the Gentiles ought to submit to the law of Moses; now, in opposition to this, Paul and Barnabas undertake to show, by a plain relation of matters of fact, that God owned the preaching of the pure gospel to them without the law, and therefore to press the law



upon them now was to undo what God had done. Observe, 1. What account they gave; they declared, or opened in order, and with all the magnifying and affecting circumstances, what glorious miracles, what signs and wonders, *God had wrought among the Gentiles by them*, what confirmation he had given to their preaching by miracles wrought in the kingdom of nature, and what success he had given to it by miracles wrought in the kingdom of grace. Thus God had honoured these apostles whom the Jewish teachers condemned, and had thus honoured the Gentiles whom they contemned. What need had they of any other advocate when God himself pleaded their cause? The conversion of the Gentiles was itself a wonder, all things considered, no less than a miracle. Now if *they received the Holy Ghost by the hearing of faith*, why should they be embarrassed with *the works of the law*? See Gal. iii. 2. 2. What attention was given to them: *All the multitude* (who, though they had not votes, yet came together to hear what was said) *kept silence, and gave audience to Paul and Barnabas*; it should seem they took more notice of their narrative than they did of all the arguments that were offered. As in natural philosophy and medicine nothing is so satisfactory as experiments, and in law nothing is so satisfactory as cases adjudged, so in the things of God the best explication of the word of grace is the accounts given of the operations of the Spirit of grace; to these the multitude will with silence give audience. Those that fear God will most readily hear those that can tell them *what God has done for their souls*, or by their means, Ps. lvi. 16.

III. The speech which James made to the synod. He did not interrupt Paul and Barnabas, though, it is likely, he had before heard their narrative, but let them go on with it, for the edification of the company, and that they might have it from the first and best hand; but, *after they had held their peace*, then James stood up. *You may all prophesy one by one*, 1 Cor. xiv. 31. God is the God of order. He let Paul and Barnabas say what they had to say, and then he made the application of it. The hearing of variety of ministers may be of use when one truth does not drive out, but clench, another.

1. He addresses himself respectfully to those present: "*Men and brethren, hearken unto me*. You are men, and therefore, it is to be hoped, will hear reason; you are my brethren, and therefore will hear me with candour. We are all brethren, and equally concerned in this cause that nothing be done to the dishonour of Christ and the uneasiness of Christians."

2. He refers to what Peter had said concerning the conversion of the Gentiles (v. 14): "*Simeon*" (that is, Simon Peter) "*hath declared, and opened the matter to you—how God at the first did visit the Gentiles*, in Cor-

nelius and his friends, who were the first-fruits of the Gentiles—how, when the gospel began first to spread, presently the Gentiles were invited to come and take the benefit of it;" and James observes here, (1.) *That the grace of God was the origin of it; it was God that visited the Gentiles*; and it was a kind visit. Had they been left to themselves, they would never have visited him, but the acquaintance began on his part; he not only *visited and redeemed his people*, but visited and redeemed those that were *lo ammi—not a people*. (2.) *That the glory of God was the end of it: it was to take out of them a people for his name*, who should glorify him, and in whom he would be glorified. As of old he took the Jews, so now the Gentiles, *to be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory*, Jer. xiii. 11. Let all the people of God remember that therefore they are thus dignified in God, that God may be glorified in them.

3. He confirms this with a quotation out of the Old Testament: he could not prove the calling of the Gentiles by a vision, as Peter could, nor by miracles wrought by his hand, as Paul and Barnabas could, but he would prove that it was foretold in the Old Testament, and therefore it must be fulfilled, v. 15. *To this agree the words of the prophets*; most of the Old-Testament prophets spoke more or less of the calling in of the Gentiles, even Moses himself, Rom. x. 19. It was the general expectation of the pious Jews that the Messiah should be *a light to enlighten the Gentiles* (Luke ii. 32): but James waives the more illustrious prophecies of this, and pitches upon one that seemed more obscure: *It is written*, Amos ix. 11, 12, where is foretold, (1.) *The setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah* (v. 16): *I will raise up the tabernacle of David, that is fallen*. The covenant was made with David and his seed; but the house and family of David are here called his *tabernacle*, because David in his beginning was a shepherd, and dwelt in tents, and his house, that had been as a stately palace, had become a mean and despicable tabernacle, reduced in a manner to its small beginning. This tabernacle was ruined and *fallen down*; there had not been for many ages a king of the house of David; *the sceptre had departed from Judah*, the royal family was sunk and buried in obscurity, and, as it should seem, not enquired after. But *God will return, and will build it again*, raise it out of its ruins, a phoenix out of its ashes; and this was now lately fulfilled, when our Lord Jesus was raised out of that family, had *the throne of his father David given him*, with a promise that *he should reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, Luke i. 32, 33. And, when *the tabernacle of David* was thus rebuilt in Christ, all the rest of it was, not many years after, wholly extirpated and cut off, as was also the nation of the Jews itself, and all their genealogies were

lost. The church of Christ may be called the tabernacle of David. This may sometimes be brought very low, and may seem to be in ruins, but it shall be built again, its withering interests shall revive; it is *cast down, but not destroyed*: even dry bones are made to live. (2.) The bringing in of the Gentiles as the effect and consequence of this (v. 17): *That the residue of men might seek after the Lord*; not the Jews only, who thought they had the monopoly of the tabernacle of David, but the *residue of men*, such as had hitherto been left out of the pale of the visible church; they must now, upon this re-edifying of the tabernacle of David, be brought to *seek after the Lord*, and to enquire how they may obtain his favour. When David's tabernacle is set up, they shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king, Hos. iii. 5; Jer. xxx. 9. Then Israel shall possess the remnant of Edom (so it is in the Hebrew); but the Jews called all the Gentiles *Edomites*, and therefore the Septuagint leave out the particular mention of Edom, and read it just as it is here, *that the residue of men might seek* (James here adds, *after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, or heathen, upon whom my name is called*). The Jews were for many ages so peculiarly favoured that the residue of men seemed neglected; but now God will have an eye to them, and his name shall be called upon by the Gentiles; his name shall be declared and published among them, and they shall be brought both to know his name and to call upon it: they shall call themselves the people of God, and he shall call them so; and thus, by consent of both parties, *his name is called upon them*. This promise we may depend upon the fulfilling of in its season; and now it begins to be fulfilled, for it is added, *saith the Lord, who doeth this; who doeth all these things* (so the Seventy); and the apostle here: *he saith it who doeth it*, who therefore said it because he was determined to do it; and who therefore does it because he hath said it; for though with us saying and doing are two things they are not so with God. The uniting of *Jews and Gentiles in one body*, and all those things that were done in order to it, which were here foretold, were, [1.] What God did: *This was the Lord's doing*, whatever instruments were employed in it: and, [2.] It was what God delighted in, and was well pleased with; for he is the God of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, and it is his honour to be rich in mercy to all that call upon him.

4. He resolves it into the purpose and counsel of God (v. 18): *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*. He not only foretold the calling of the Gentiles many ages ago by the prophets (and therefore it ought not to be a surprise or stumbling-block to us), but he foresaw and foreordained it in his eternal counsels, which are unquestionably wise and unalterably firm.

It is an excellent maxim here laid down concerning all God's works, both of providence and grace, in the natural and spiritual kingdom, that they were all *known unto him from the beginning of the world*, from the time he first began to work, which supposes his knowing them (as other scriptures speak) *from before the foundation of the world*, and therefore from all eternity. Note, Whatever God does, he did before design and determine to do; for he works all, not only according to his will, but *according to the counsel of his will*: he not only does whatever he determined (Ps. cxxxv. 6), which is more than we can do (our purposes are frequently broken off, and our measures broken), but he *determined whatever he does*. Whatever he may say, to prove us, *he himself knows what he will do*. We know not our works beforehand, but must *do as occasion shall serve*, 1 Sam. x. 7. What we shall do in such or such a case we cannot tell till it comes to the setting to; but *known unto God are all his works*; in the volume of his book (called *the scriptures of truth*, Dan. x. 21) they are all written in order, without any erasure or interlining (Ps. xl. 7); and all God's works will, in the day of review, be found to agree exactly with his counsels, without the least error or variation. We are poor short-sighted creatures; the wisest men can see but a little way before them, and not at all with any certainty; but this is our comfort, that, whatever uncertainty we are at, there is an infallible certainty in the divine prescience: *known unto God are all his works*.

5. He gives his advice what was to be done in the present case, as the matter now stood with reference to the Gentiles (v. 19): *My sentence is; ἐγὼ κρίνω—I give it as my opinion*, or judgment; not as having authority over the rest, but as being an adviser with them. Now his advice is,

(1.) That circumcision and the observance of the ceremonial law be by no means imposed upon the Gentile converts; no, not so much as recommended nor mentioned to them. "There are many from among the Gentiles that are turned to God in Christ, and we hope there will be many more. Now I am clearly for using them with all possible tenderness, and putting no manner of hardship or discouragement upon them," *μὴ παρενοχλεῖν*—"not to give them any molestation nor disturbance, nor suggest any thing to them that may be disquieting, or raise scruples in their minds, or perplex them." Note, Great care must be taken not to discourage nor disquiet young converts with matters of doubtful disputation. Let the essentials of religion, which an awakened conscience will readily receive, be first impressed deeply upon them, and these will satisfy them and make them easy; and let not things foreign and circumstantial be urged upon them, which will but trouble them. *The kingdom of God*, in which they are to be trained up,



is not meat and drink, neither the opposition nor the imposition of indifferent things, which will but trouble them; but it is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which we are sure will trouble nobody.

(2.) That yet it would be well that in some things, which gave most offence to the Jews, the Gentiles should comply with them. Because they must not humour them so far as to be circumcised, and keep the whole law, it does not therefore follow that they must act in a continual contradiction to them, and study how to provoke them. It will please the Jews (and, if a little thing will oblige them, better do so than cross them) if the Gentile converts abstain, [1.] *From pollutions of idols, and from fornication*, which are two bad things, and always to be abstained from; but writing to them particularly and expressly to abstain from them (because in these things the Jews were jealous of the Gentile converts, lest they should transgress) would very much gratify the Jews; not but that the apostles, both in preaching and writing to the Gentiles that embraced Christianity, were careful to warn against, *First, Pollutions of idols*, that they should have no manner of fellowship with idolaters in their idolatrous worships, and particularly not in the feasts they held upon their sacrifices. See 1 Cor. x. 14, &c.; 2 Cor. vi. 14, &c. *Secondly, Fornication, and all manner of uncleanness*. How large, how pressing, is Paul in his cautions against this sin! 1 Cor. vi. 9—15; Eph. v. 3, &c. But the Jews, who were willing to think the worst of those they did not like, suggested that these were things in which the Gentiles, even after conversion, allowed themselves, and the apostle of the Gentiles connived at it. Now, to obviate this suggestion, and to leave no room for this calumny, James advises that, besides the private admonitions which were given them by their ministers, they should be publicly warned to *abstain from pollutions of idols and from fornication*—that herein they should be very circumspect, and should avoid all appearances of these two evils, which would be in so particular a manner offensive to the Jews. [2.] *From things strangled, and from blood*, which, though not evil in themselves, as the other two, nor designed to be always abstained from, as those were, had been forbidden by the *precepts of Noah* (Gen ix. 4), before the giving of the law of Moses; and the Jews had a great dislike to them, and to all those that took a liberty to use them; and therefore, to avoid giving offence, let the Gentile converts abridge themselves of their liberty herein, 1 Cor. viii. 9, 13. Thus we must *become all things to all men*.

6. He gives a reason for his advice—that great respect ought to be shown to the Jews, for they have been so long accustomed to the solemn injunctions of the ceremonial law that they must be borne with, if they cannot

presently come off from them (v. 21). *For Moses hath of old those that preach him in every city*, his writings (a considerable part of which is the ceremonial law) *being read in the synagogues every sabbath day*. “You cannot blame them if they have a great veneration for the law of Moses; for besides that they are very sure God spoke by Moses,” (1.) “Moses is continually preached to them, and they are called upon to remember the law of Moses,” Mal. iv. 4. Note, Even that word of God which is written to us should also be preached: those that have the scriptures have still need of ministers to help them to understand and apply the scriptures. (2.) “His writings are read in a solemn religious manner, in their synagogues, and on the sabbath day, in the place and at the time of their meetings for the worship of God; so that from their childhood they have been trained up in a regard to the law of Moses; the observance of it is a part of their religion.” (3.) “This has been done of old time; they have received from their fathers an honour for Moses; they have antiquity for it.” (4.) “This has been done in every city, wherever there are any Jews, so that none of them can be ignorant what stress that law laid upon these things: and therefore, though the gospel has set us free from these things, yet they cannot be blamed if they are loth to part with them, and cannot of a sudden be persuaded to look upon those things as needless and indifferent which they, and their fathers before them, had been so long taught, and taught of God too, to place religion in. We must therefore give them time, must meet them half-way; they must be borne with awhile, and brought on gradually, and we must comply with them as far as we can without betraying our gospel liberty.” Thus does this apostle show the spirit of a moderator, that is, a spirit of moderation, being careful to give no offence either to Jew or Gentile, and contriving, as much as may be, to please both sides and provoke neither. Note, We are not to think it strange if people be wedded to customs which they have had transmitted to them from their fathers, and which they have been educated in an opinion of as sacred; and therefore allowances must be made in such cases, and not rigour used.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and

Syria and Cilicia: 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:* 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. 30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: 31 *Which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*. 33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. 34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. 35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also

We have here the result of the consultation that was held at Jerusalem about the imposing of the ceremonial law upon the Gentiles. Much more, it is likely, was said about it than is here recorded; but at length it was brought to a head, and the advice which James gave was universally approved and agreed to *nemine contradicente—unanimously*; and letters were accordingly sent by messengers of their own to the Gentile converts, acquainting them with their sentiments in this matter, which would be a great confirmation to them against the false teachers. Now observe here,

I. The choice of the delegates that were to be sent with Paul and Barnabas on this er-

rand; not as if they had any suspicion of the fidelity of these great men, and could not trust them with their letters, nor as if they thought that those to whom they sent them would suspect them to have altered anything in their letter; no, their charity thought no such evil concerning men of such tried integrity; but,

1. They thought fit to send men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, *v. 22*. This was agreed to by the apostles and elders, with the whole church, who, it is likely, undertook to bear their charges, 1 Cor. ix. 7. They sent these messengers, (1.) To show their respect to the church at Antioch, as a sister-church, though a younger sister, and that they looked upon it as upon the same level with them; as also that they were desirous further to know their state. (2.) To encourage Paul and Barnabas, and to make their journey home the more pleasant (for it is likely they travelled on foot) by sending such excellent men to bear them company; *amicus pro vehiculo—a friend instead of a carriage*. (3.) To put a reputation upon the letters they carried, that it might appear a solemn embassy, and so much the more regard might be paid to the message, which was likely to meet with opposition from some. (4.) To keep up the communion of saints, and cultivate an acquaintance between churches and ministers that were at a distance from each other, and to show that, though they were many, yet they were one.

2. Those they sent were not inferior persons, who might serve to carry the letters, and attest the receipt of them from the apostles; but they were chosen men, and chief men among the brethren, men of eminent gifts, graces, and usefulness; for these are the things which denominate men chief among the brethren, and qualify them to be the messengers of the churches. They are here named: Judas, who was called Barsabas (probably the brother of that Joseph who was called Barsabas, that was a candidate for the apostleship, *ch. i. 23*), and Silas. The character which these men had in the church at Jerusalem would have some influence upon those that came from Judea, as those false teachers did, and engage them to pay the more deference to the message that was sent by them.

II. The drawing up of the letters, circular letters, that were to be sent to the churches, to notify the sense of the synod in this matter.

1. Here is a very condescending obliging preamble to this decree, *v. 23*. There is nothing in it haughty or assuming, but, (1.) That which intimates the humility of the apostles, that they join the elders and brethren in commission with them, the ministers, the ordinary Christians, whom they had advised with in this case, as they used to do in other cases. Though never men were so qualified as they were for a monarchical power and



authority in the church, nor had such a commission as they had, yet their decrees run not, "We, the apostles, Christ's vicars upon earth, and pastors of all the pastors of the churches" (as the pope styles himself), "and sole judges in all matters of faith;" but *the apostles, and elders, and brethren*, agree in their orders. Herein they remembered the instructions their Master gave them (Matt. xxiii. 8): *Be not you called Rabbi; for you are all brethren.* (2.) That which bespeaks their respect to the churches they wrote to; they *send to them greeting*, wish them health and happiness and joy, and call them *brethren of the Gentiles*, thereby owning their admission into the church, and giving them the right hand of fellowship: "You are our brethren, though Gentiles; for we meet in Christ, *the first born among many brethren*, in God our common Father." Now that *the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and of the same body*, they are to be countenanced and encouraged, and called brethren.

2. Here is a just and severe rebuke to the judaizing teachers (v. 24): "*We have heard that certain who went out from us have troubled you with words*, and we are very much concerned to hear it; now this is to let them know that those who preached this doctrine were false teachers, both as they produced a false commission and as they taught a false doctrine." (1.) They did a great deal of wrong to the apostles and ministers at Jerusalem, in pretending that they had instructions from them to impose the ceremonial law upon the Gentiles, when there was no colour for such a pretension. "*They went out from us* indeed—they were such as belonged to our church, of which, when they had a mind to travel, we gave them perhaps a testimonial; but, as for their urging the law of Moses upon you, we *gave them no such commandment*, nor had we ever thought of such a thing, nor given them the least occasion to use our names in it." It is no new thing for apostolical authority to be pleaded in defence of those doctrines and practices for which yet the apostles gave neither command nor encouragement. (2.) They did a great deal of wrong to the Gentile converts, in saying, *You must be circumcised, and must keep the law.* [1.] It perplexed them: "*They have troubled you with words*, have occasioned disturbance and disquietment to you. You depended upon those who told you, *If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved*; and now you are startled by those that tell you *you must keep the law of Moses or you cannot be saved*, by which you see yourselves drawn into a snare. They trouble you with words—words, and nothing else—mere words—sound, but no substance." How has the church been troubled with words, by the pride of men that loved to hear themselves talk! [2.] It endangered them; they *subverted* their souls, put them into disorder, and pulled down

that which had been built up. They took them off from pursuing pure Christianity, and minding the business of that, by filling their heads with the necessity of circumcision, and the law of Moses, which were nothing to the purpose.

3. Here is an honourable testimony given of the messengers by whom these letters were sent.

(1.) Of Paul and Barnabas, whom these judaizing teachers had opposed and censured as having done their work by the halves, because they had brought the Gentile converts to Christianity only, and not to Judaism. Let them say what they will of these men, [1.] "They are men that are dear to us; they are *our beloved Barnabas and Paul*—men whom we have a value for, a kindness for, a concern for." Sometimes it is good for those that are of eminence to express their esteem, not only for the despised truth of Christ, but for the despised preachers and defenders of that truth, to encourage them, and weaken the hands of their opposers. [2.] "They are men that have signalized themselves in the service of Christ, and therefore have deserved well of all the churches: they are men *that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* (v. 26), and therefore are worthy of double honour, and cannot be suspected of having sought any secular advantage to themselves; for they have ventured their all for Christ, have engaged in the most dangerous services, as good soldiers of Christ, and not only in laborious services." It is not likely that such faithful confessors should be unfaithful preachers. Those that urged circumcision did it to avoid persecution (Gal. vi. 12, 13); those that opposed it knew they thereby exposed themselves to persecution; and which of these were most likely to be in the right?

(2.) Of Judas and Silas: *They are chosen men* (v. 25), and they are men that have heard our debates, and are perfectly apprized of the matter, and will *tell you the same things by mouth*," v. 27. What is of use to us it is good to have both in writing and by word of mouth, that we may have the advantage both of reading and of hearing it. The apostles refer them to the bearers for a further account of their judgment and their reasons, and the bearers will refer them to their letters for the certainty of the determination.

4. Here is the direction given what to require from the Gentile converts, where observe,

(1.) The matter of the injunction, which is according to the advice given by James, that, to avoid giving offence to the Jews, [1.] They should never eat any thing that they knew had been offered in sacrifice to an idol, but look upon it as, though clean in itself, yet thereby polluted to them. This prohibition was afterwards in part taken off, for they were allowed to eat whatever was sold in the shambles, or set before them at their friend's

table, though it had been offered to idols, except when there was danger of giving offence by it, that is, of giving occasion either to a weak Christian to think the worse of our Christianity, or to a wicked heathen to think the better of his idolatry; and in these cases it is *good to forbear*, 1 Cor. x. 25, &c. This to us is an antiquated case. [2.] *That they should not eat blood*, nor drink it; but avoid every thing that looked cruel and barbarous in that ceremony which had been of so long standing. [3.] *That they should not eat any thing that was strangled*, or died of itself, or had not the blood let out. [4.] That they should be very strict in censuring those that *were guilty of fornication*, or marrying within the degrees prohibited by the Levitical law, which, some think, is principally intended here. See 1 Cor. v. 1. Dr. Hammond states this matter thus: The Judaizing teachers would have the Gentile converts to submit to all that those submitted to whom they called the proselytes of righteousness, *to be circumcised and keep the whole law*; but the apostles required no more of them than what was required of the proselytes of the gate, which was to observe *the seven precepts of the sons of Noah*, which, he thinks, are here referred to. But the only ground of this decree being in complaisance to the rigid Jews that had embraced the Christian faith, and, except in that one case of scandal, all meats being pronounced free and indifferent to all Christians as soon as the reason of the decree ceased, which, at furthest, was after the destruction of Jerusalem, the obligation of it ceased likewise. "These things are in a particular manner offensive to the Jews, and therefore do not disoblige them herein for the present; in a little time the Jews will incorporate with the Gentiles, and then the danger is over."

(2.) The manner in which it is worded. [1.] They express themselves with something of authority, that what they wrote might be received with respect, and deference paid to it: *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*, that is, to us under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and by direction from him: not only the apostles, but others, were endued with spiritual gifts extraordinary, and knew more of the mind of God than any since those gifts ceased can pretend to; their infallibility gave an incontestable authority to their decrees, and they would not order any thing because it *seemed good to them*, but that they knew it *first seemed good to the Holy Ghost*. Or it refers to what the Holy Ghost had determined in this matter formerly. When the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles, he endued them with the gift of tongues, in order to their preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, which was a plain indication of God's purpose to call them in. When the Holy Ghost descended upon Cornelius and his friends, upon Peter's preaching, it was plain that Christ designed the taking down of the

Jewish pale, within which they fancied the Spirit had been enclosed. [2.] They express themselves with abundance of tenderness and fatherly concern. *First*, They are afraid of burdening them: *We will lay upon you no greater burden*. So far were they from delighting to impose upon them that they dreaded nothing so much as imposing too far upon them, so as to discourage them at their setting out. *Secondly*, They impose upon them *no other than necessary things*. "The avoiding of fornication is necessary to all Christians at all times; the avoiding of things strangled, and of blood, and of things offered to idols, is necessary at this time, for the keeping up of a good understanding between you and the Jews, and the preventing of offence;" and as long as it continues necessary for that end, and no longer, it is enjoined. Note, Church-rulers should impose only necessary things, things which Christ has made our duty, which have a real tendency to the edification of the church, and, as here, to the uniting of good Christians. If they impose things only to show their own authority, and to try people's obedience, they forget that they have not authority to make new laws, but only to see that the laws of Christ be duly executed, and to enforce the observance of them. *Thirdly*, They enforce their order with a commendation of those that shall comply with it, rather than with the condemnation of those that shall transgress it. They do not conclude, "From which if you do not keep yourselves, you shall be an anathema, you shall be cast out of the church, and accursed," according to the style of after-councils, and particularly that of Trent; but, "*From which if you keep yourselves*, as we do not question but you will, *you will do well*; it will be for the glory of God, the furtherance of the gospel, the strengthening of the hands of your brethren, and your own credit and comfort." It is all sweetness and love and good humour, such as became the followers of him who, when he called us to take his yoke upon us, assured us we should find him *meek and lowly in heart*. The difference of the style of the true apostles from that of the false is very observable. Those that were for imposing the ceremonial laws were positive and imperious: *Except you keep it, you cannot be saved* (v. 1), you are excommunicated *ipso facto*—*at once, and delivered to Satan*. The apostles of Christ, who only recommend necessary things, are mild and gentle "*From which if you keep yourselves, you will do well*, and as becomes you. *Fare ye well*; we are hearty well-wishers to your honour and peace."

III. The delivering of the letters, and how the messengers disposed of themselves.

1. *When they were dismissed*, had had their audience of leave of the apostles (it is probable that they were dismissed with prayer, and a solemn blessing in the name of the Lord, and with instructions and encouragements in their work), *they then came to An-*



*tiach*; they staid no longer at Jerusalem than till their business was done, and then came back, and perhaps were met at their return by those that brought them on their way at their setting out; for those that have taken pains in public service ought to be countenanced and encouraged.

2. As soon as they came to Antioch, *they gathered the multitude together, and delivered the epistle to them* (v. 30, 31), that they might all know what it was that was forbidden them, and might observe these orders, which would be no difficulty for them to do, most of them having been, before their conversion to Christ, proselytes of the gate, who had laid themselves under these restrictions already. But this was not all; it was that they might know that *no more* than this was forbidden them, that it was no longer a sin to eat swine's flesh, no longer a pollution to touch a grave or a dead body.

3. The people were wonderfully pleased with the orders that came from Jerusalem (v. 31): *They rejoiced for the consolation*; and a great consolation it was to the multitude, (1.) That they were confirmed in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and were not burdened with that, as those upstart teachers would have had them to be. It was a comfort to them to hear that the carnal ordinances were no longer imposed on them, which perplexed the conscience, but could not purify nor pacify it. (2.) That those who troubled their minds with an attempt to force circumcision upon them were hereby for the present silenced and put to confusion, the fraud of their pretensions to an apostolical warrant being now discovered. (3.) That the Gentiles were hereby encouraged to receive the gospel, and those that had received it to adhere to it. (4.) That the peace of the church was hereby restored, and that removed which threatened a division. All this was consolation which they rejoiced in, and blessed God for.

4. They got the strange ministers that came from Jerusalem to give them each a sermon, and more, v. 32. Judas and Silas, *being prophets also themselves*, endued with the Holy Ghost, and called to the work, and being likewise entrusted by the apostles to deliver some things relating to this matter by word of mouth, *exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them*. Even those that had the constant preaching of Paul and Barnabas, yet were glad of the help of Judas and Silas; the diversity of the gifts of ministers is of use to the church. Observe what is the work of ministers with those that are in Christ. (1.) To confirm them, by bringing them to see more reason both for their faith in Christ and their obedience to him; to confirm their choice of Christ and their resolutions for Christ. (2.) To exhort them to perseverance, and to the particular duties required of them: to quicken them to that which is good, and direct them in it. They

comforted the brethren (so it may be rendered), and this would contribute to the confirming of them; for the joy of the Lord will be our strength. They exhorted them with many words; they used a very great copiousness and variety of expression. One word would affect one, and another another; and therefore, though what they had to say might have been summed up in a few words, yet it was for the edification of the church that they used *many words*, *ἐὰν λόγου πολλοῦ*—*with much speech, much reasoning; precept must be upon precept*.

5. The dismissal of the Jerusalem ministers, v. 33. When they had *spent some time among them* (so it might be read), *ποιήσαντες χρόνον*—*having made some stay*, and having made it to good purpose, not having trifled away time, but having filled it up, they were let go in peace from the brethren at Antioch, to the apostles at Jerusalem, with all possible expressions of kindness and respect; they thanked them for their coming and pains, and the good service they had done, wished them their health and a good journey home, and committed them to the custody of the peace of God.

6. The continuance of Silas, notwithstanding, together with Paul and Barnabas, at Antioch. (1.) Silas, when it came to the setting to, would not go back with Judas to Jerusalem, but let him go home by himself, and chose rather to *abide still at Antioch*, v. 34. And we have no reason at all to blame him for it, though we know not the reason that moved him to it. I am apt to think the congregations at Antioch were both more large and more lively than those at Jerusalem, and that this tempted him to stay there, and he did well: so did Judas, who, notwithstanding this, returned to his post of service at Jerusalem. (2.) Paul and Barnabas, though their work lay chiefly among the Gentiles, yet continued for some time in Antioch, being pleased with the society of the ministers and people there, which, it should seem by divers passages, was more than ordinarily inviting. They continued there, not to take their pleasure, but *teaching and preaching the word of God*. Antioch, being the chief city of Syria, it is probable there was a great resort of Gentiles thither from all parts upon one account or other, as there was of Jews to Jerusalem; so that in preaching there they did in effect preach to many nations, for they preached to those who would carry the report of what they preached to many nations, and thereby prepare them for the apostles' coming in person to preach to them. And thus they were not only not idle at Antioch, but were serving their main intention. (3.) There were *many others also* there, labouring at the same oar. The multitude of workmen in Christ's vineyard does not give us a writ of ease. Even where there are many others labouring in the word and doctrine, yet there may be opportunity for us; the zeal and

usefulness of others should excite us, not lay us asleep.

36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see how they do.* 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

We have seen one unhappy difference among the brethren, which was of a public nature, brought to a good issue; but here we have a private quarrel between two ministers, no less men than Paul and Barnabas, not compromised indeed, yet ending well.

I. Here is a good proposal Paul made to Barnabas to go and review their work among the Gentiles and renew it, to take a circuit among the churches they had planted, and see what progress the gospel made among them. Antioch was now a safe and quiet harbour for them: they had there no adversary nor evil occurrent; but Paul remembered that they only put in there to refit and refresh themselves, and therefore begins now to think of putting to sea again; and, having been in winter quarters long enough, he is for taking the field again, and making another campaign, in a vigorous prosecution of this holy war against Satan's kingdom. Paul remembered that the work appointed him was afar off among the Gentiles, and therefore he is here meditating a second expedition among them to do the same work, though to encounter the same difficulties; and this *some days after*, for his active spirit could not bear to be long out of work; no, nor his bold and daring spirit to be long out of danger. Observe, 1. To whom he makes this proposal—to Barnabas, his old friend and fellow-labourer; he invites his company and help in this work. We have need one of another, and may be in many ways serviceable one to another; and therefore should be forward both to borrow and lend assistance. Two are better than one. Every soldier has his comrade. 2. For whom the visit is designed: "Let us not presently begin new work, nor

break up new ground; but let us take a view of the fields we have sown. *Come, and let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish,* Cant. vii. 12. *Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord.*" Observe, He calls all the Christians brethren, and not ministers only; for, *Have we not all one Father?* He has a concern for them in every city, even where the brethren were fewest and poorest, and most persecuted and despised; yet let us visit them. Wherever we have preached the word of the Lord, let us go and water the seed sown. Note, Those that have preached the gospel should visit those to whom they have preached it. As we must look after our praying, and hear what answer God gives to that; so we must look after our preaching, and see what success that has. Faithful ministers cannot but have a particular tender concern for those to whom they have preached the gospel, that they may not bestow upon them labour in vain. See 1 Thess. iii. 5, 6. 3. What was intended in this visit: "Let us see how they do," *πῶς ἔχουσιν—how it is with them.* It was not merely a compliment that he designed, nor did he take such a journey with a bare *How do you do?* No, he would visit them that he might acquaint himself with their case, and impart unto them such spiritual gifts as were suited to it; as the physician visits his recovering patient, that he may prescribe what is proper for the perfecting of his cure, and the preventing of a relapse. Let us see how they do, that is, (1.) What spirit they are of, how they stand affected, and how they behave themselves; it is probable that they frequently heard from them, "But let us go and see them; let us go and see whether they hold fast what we preached to them, and live up to it, that we may endeavour to reduce them if we find them wandering, to confirm them if we find them wavering, and to comfort them if we find them steady." (2.) What state they are in, whether the churches have rest and liberty, or whether they are not in trouble or distress, that we may rejoice with them if they rejoice, and caution them against security, and may weep with them if they weep, and comfort them under the cross, and may know the better how to pray for them.

II. The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas about an assistant; it was convenient to have a young man with them that should attend on them and minister to them, and be a witness of their *doctrine, manner of life, and patience*, and that should be fitted and trained up for further service, by being occasionally employed in the present service. Now, 1. Barnabas would have his nephew John, whose surname was Mark, to go along with them, v. 37. He determined to take him, because he was his relation, and, it is likely, was brought up under him, and he had a kindness for him, and was solicitous



for his welfare. We should suspect ourselves of partiality, and guard against it in preferring our relations. 2. Paul opposed it (v. 38): *He thought not good to take him with them, οὐκ ἤξιον—he did not think him worthy of the honour, nor fit for the service, who had departed from them, clandestinely as it should seem, without their knowledge, or wilfully, without their consent, from Pamphylia (ch. xiii. 13), and went not with them to the work, because he was either lazy and would not take the pains that must be taken, or cowardly and would not run the hazard. He run his colours just as they were going to engage. It is probable that he promised very fair now that he would not do so again. But Paul thought it was not fit he should be thus honoured who had forfeited his reputation, nor thus employed who had betrayed his trust; at least, not till he had been longer tried. If a man deceive me once, it is his fault; but, if twice, it is my own, for trusting him. Solomon saith, Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint, which will hardly be used again, Prov. xxv. 19.*

III. The issue of this disagreement: it came to such a height that they separated upon it. The contention, the *paroxysm* (so the word is), the fit of passion which this threw them both into, was so sharp that they *departed asunder one from the other*. Barnabas was peremptory that he would not go with Paul unless they took John Mark with them; Paul was as peremptory that he would not go if John did go with them. Neither would yield, and therefore there is no remedy but they must part. Now here is that which is very humbling, and just matter of lamentation, and yet very instructive. For we see, 1. That the best of men are but men, *subject to like passions* as we are, as these two good men had expressly owned concerning themselves (ch. xiv. 15), and now it appeared too true. I doubt there was (as usually there is in such contentions) a *fault on both sides*; perhaps Paul was too severe upon the young man, and did not allow his fault the extenuation it was capable of, did not consider what a useful woman his mother was in Jerusalem (ch. xii. 12), nor make the allowances he might have made to Barnabas's natural affection. But it was Barnabas's fault that he took this into consideration, in a case wherein the interest of Christ's kingdom was concerned, and indulged it too much. And they were certainly both in fault to be hot as to let the contention be sharp (it is to be feared they gave one another some hard words), as also to be so stiff as each to stick resolutely to his opinion, and neither to yield. It is a pity that they did not refer the matter to a third person, or that some friend did not interpose to prevent its coming to an open rupture. Is there never a wise man among them to interpose his good offices, and to accommodate the matter, and to put them in

mind of the Canaanite and the Perizzite that were *now in the land*, and that not only Jews and heathens, but the false brethren among themselves, would warm their hands at the flames of the contention between Paul and Barnabas? We must own it was their infirmity, and is recorded for our admonition; not that we must make use of it to excuse our own intemperate heats and passions, or to rebate the edge of our sorrow and shame for them; we must not say, "What if I was in a passion, were not Paul and Barnabas so?" No; but it must check our censures of others, and moderate them. If good men are soon put into a passion, we must make the best of it, it was the infirmity once of two of the best men that ever the world had. Repentance teaches us to be severe in reflections upon ourselves; but charity teaches us to be candid in our reflections upon others. It is only Christ's example that is a copy without a blot. 2. That we are not to think it strange if there be differences among wise and good men, we were told before that such offences would come, and here is an instance of it. Even those that are united to one and the same Jesus, and sanctified by one and the same Spirit, have different apprehensions, different opinions, different views, and different sentiments in points of prudence. It will be so while we are in this state of darkness and imperfection; we shall never be all of a mind till we come to heaven, where light and love are perfect. That is *charity which never fails*. 3. That these differences often prevail so far as to occasion separations Paul and Barnabas, who were not separated by the persecutions of the unbelieving Jews, nor the impositions of the believing Jews, were yet separated by an unhappy disagreement between themselves. O the mischief that even the poor and weak remainders of pride and passion, that are found even in good men, do in the world, do in the church! No wonder the consequences are so fatal where they reign.

IV. The good that was brought out of this evil—meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. It was strange that even the sufferings of the apostles (as Phil. i. 12), but much more strange that even the quarrels of the apostles, should tend to the *furtherance of the gospel of Christ*; yet so it proved here. God would not permit such things to be, if he knew not how to make them to serve his own purposes. 1. More places are hereby visited. Barnabas went one way; he sailed to Cyprus (v. 39), that famous island where they began their work (ch. xiii. 4), and which was *his own country*, ch. iv. 36. Paul went another way into Cilicia, which was *his own country*, ch. xxi. 39. Each seems to be influenced by his affection to his native soil, as usual (*Nescio quā natale solum dulcedine cunctos ducit—There is something that attaches us all to our native soil*), and yet God served his own purposes by it, for the diffusing of

gospel light. 2. More hands are hereby employed in the ministry of the gospel among the Gentiles; for, (1.) John Mark, who had been an unfaithful hand, is not rejected, but is again made use of, against Paul's mind, and, for aught we know, proves a very useful and successful hand, though many think it was not the same with that Mark that wrote the gospel, and founded the church at Alexandria, and whom Peter calls his son, 1 Pet. v. 13. (2.) Silas who was a new hand, and never yet employed in that work, nor intended to be, but to return to the service of the church at Jerusalem, had not God changed his mind (v. 33, 34), he is brought in, and engaged in that noble work.

V. We may further observe, 1. That the church at Antioch seem to countenance Paul in what he did. Barnabas sailed with his nephew to Cyprus, and no notice was taken of him, nor a *bene discessit*—a recommendation given him. Note, Those that in their service of the church are swayed by private affections and regards forfeit public honours and respect. But, when Paul departed, he was recommended by the brethren to the grace of God. They thought he was in the right in refusing to make use of John Mark, and could not but blame Barnabas for insisting upon it, though he was one who had deserved well of the church (ch. xi. 22) before they knew Paul; and therefore they prayed publicly for Paul, and for the success of his ministry, encouraged him to go on in his work, and, though they could do nothing themselves to further him, they transferred the matter to the grace of God, leaving it to that grace both to work upon him and to work with him. Note, Those are happy at all times, and especially in times of disagreement and contention, who are enabled so to carry themselves as not to forfeit their interest in the love and prayers of good people. 2. That yet Paul afterwards seems to have had, though not upon second thoughts, yet upon further trial, a better opinion of John Mark than now he had; for he writes to Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 11), *Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry*; and he writes to the Colossians concerning Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, that if he came to them they should receive him, bid him welcome, and employ him (Col. iv. 10), which teaches us, (1.) That even those whom we justly condemn we should condemn moderately, and with a great deal of temper, because we know not but afterwards we may see cause to think better of them, and both to make use of them and make friendship with them, and we should so regulate our resentments that if it should prove so we may not afterwards be ashamed of them. (2.) That even those whom we have justly condemned, if afterwards they prove more faithful, we should cheerfully receive, forgive and forget, and put a confidence in, and, as there is occasion, give a good word

to. 3. That Paul, though he wanted his old friend and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, yet went on cheerfully in his work (v. 41): *He went through Syria and Cilicia*, countries which lay next to Antioch, *confirming the churches*. Though we change our colleagues, we do not change our principal president. And observe, Ministers are well employed, and ought to think themselves so, and be satisfied, when they are made use of in confirming those that believe, as well as in converting those that believe not.

## CHAP. XVI.

It is some rebuke to Barnabas that after he left Paul he hear no more of him, of what he did or suffered for Christ. But Paul, as he was recommended by the brethren to the grace of God, so his services for Christ after this are largely recorded; we are to attend him in this chapter from place to place, wherever he came doing good, either watering or planting; beginning new work or improving what was done. Here is, I. The beginning of his acquaintance with Timothy, and taking him to be his assistant, ver. 1—3. II. The visit he made to the churches for their establishment, ver. 4, 5. III. His call to Macedonia (after a restraint he had been under from going to some other places), and his coming to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia, with his entertainment there, ver. 6—13. IV. The conversion of Lydia there, ver. 14, 15. V. The casting of an evil spirit out of a dæmone, ver. 16—18. VI. The accusing and abusing of Paul and Silas for it, their imprisonment, and the indignities done them, ver. 19—24. VII. The miraculous conversion of the jailer to the faith of Christ, ver. 25—34. VIII. The honourable discharge of Paul and Silas by the magistrates, ver. 35—40.

**T**HEN came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: 2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. 4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. 5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Paul was a spiritual father, and as such a one we have him here adopting Timothy, and taking care of the education of many others who had been begotten to Christ by his ministry: and in all he appears to have been a wise and tender father. Here is,

I. His taking Timothy into his acquaintance and under his tuition. One thing designed in the book of the Acts is to help us to understand Paul's epistles, two of which are directed to Timothy; it was therefore necessary that in the history of Paul we should have some account concerning him. And we are here accordingly told, 1. That he was a disciple, one that belonged to Christ, and was baptized, probably in his infancy, when his mother became a believer, as Lydia's



household was baptised upon her believing, v. 15. Him, that was a disciple of Christ, Paul took to be his disciple, that he might further train him up in the knowledge and faith of Christ; he took him to be brought up for Christ. 2: That his mother was a Jewess originally, *but believed in Christ*; her name was *Emice*, his grandmother's name was *Lois*. Paul speaks of them both with great respect, as women of eminent virtue and piety, and commends them especially for their unfeigned faith (2 Tim. i. 5), their sincerely embracing and adhering to the doctrine of Christ. 3. That his father was a Greek, a Gentile. The marriage of a Jewish woman to a Gentile husband (though some would make a difference) was prohibited as much as the marriage of a Jewish man to a Gentile wife, Deut. vii. 3. Thou shalt no more give thy daughter to his son than take his daughter to thy son; yet this seems to have been limited to the nations that lived among them in Canaan, whom they were most in danger of infection from. Now because his father was a Greek he was not circumcised: for the entail of the covenant and the seal of it, as of other entails in that nation, went by the father, not by the mother; so that his father being no Jew he was not obliged to circumcision, nor entitled to it, unless when he grew up he did himself desire it. But, observe, though his mother could not prevail to have him circumcised in his infancy, because his father was of another mind and way, yet she educated him in the fear of God, that though he wanted the sign of the covenant he might not want the thing signified. 4. That he had gained a very good character among the Christians: he was *well reported of by the brethren* that were at Lystra and Iconium; he had not only an unblemished reputation, and was free from scandal, but he had a bright reputation, and great encouragements were given of him, as an extraordinary young man, and one from whom great things were expected. Not only those in the place where he was born, but those in the neighbouring cities, admired him, and spoke honourably of him. He had a name for good things with good people. 5. That Paul would have him to go forth with him, to accompany him, to give attendance on him, to receive instruction from him, and to join with him in the work of the gospel—to preach for him when there was occasion, and to be left behind in places where he had planted churches. Paul had a great love for him, not only because he was an ingenious young man, and one of great parts, but because he was a serious young man, and one of devout affections: for Paul was always mindful of his tears, 2 Tim. i. 4. 6. That Paul took him and circumcised him, or ordered it to be done. This was strange. Had not Paul opposed those with all his might that were for imposing circumcision upon the Gentile converts? Had he not at this

time the decrees of the council at Jerusalem with him, which witnessed against it? He had, and yet circumcised Timothy, not, as those teachers designed in imposing circumcision, to oblige him to keep the ceremonial law, but only to render his conversation and ministry passable, and, if it might be, acceptable among the Jews that abounded in those quarters. He knew Timothy was a man likely to do a great deal of good among them, being admirably qualified for the ministry, if they were not invincibly prejudiced against him; and therefore, that they might not shun him as one unclean, because uncircumcised, he took him and circumcised him. Thus to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, and all things to all men, that he might gain some. He was against those who made circumcision necessary to salvation, but used it himself when it was conducive to edification; nor was he rigid in opposing it, as they were in imposing it. Thus, though he went not in this instance according to the letter of the decree, he went according to the spirit of it, which was a spirit of tenderness towards the Jews, and willingness to bring them off gradually from their prejudices. Paul made no difficulty of taking Timothy to be his companion, though he was uncircumcised; but the Jews would not hear him if he were, and therefore Paul will humour them herein. It is probable that it was at this time that Paul laid his hands on Timothy, for the conferring of the gift of the Holy Ghost upon him, 2 Tim. i. 6.

II. His confirming the churches which he had planted (v. 4, 5): *He went through the cities where he had preached the word of the Lord*, as he intended (ch. xv. 36), to enquire into their state. And we are told,

1. That they delivered to them copies of the decrees of the Jerusalem synod, to be a direction to them in the government of themselves, and that they might have wherewith to answer the judaizing teachers, and to justify themselves in adhering to the liberty with which Christ had made them free. All the churches were concerned in that decree, and therefore it was requisite they should all have it well attested. Though Paul had for a particular reason circumcised Timothy, yet he would not have that drawn into a precedent; and therefore he delivered the decrees to the churches, to be religiously observed; for they must abide by the rule, and not be drawn from it by a particular example.

2. That this was of very good service to them. (1.) The churches were hereby established in the faith, v. 5. They were confirmed particularly in their opinion against the imposing of the ceremonial law upon the Gentiles; the great assurance and heat wherewith the judaizing teachers pressed the necessity of circumcision, and the plausible arguments they produced for it, had shocked them, so that they began to waver concerning it. But when they saw the testimony, not



only of the apostles and elders, but of the Holy Ghost in them, against it, they were established, and did not longer waver about it. Note, Testimonies to truth, though they may not prevail to convince those that oppose it, may be of very good use to establish those that are in doubt concerning it, and to fix them. Nay, the design of this decree being to set aside the ceremonial law, and the carnal ordinances of that, they were by it established in the Christian faith in general, and were the more firmly assured that it was of God, because it set up a spiritual way of serving God, as more suited to the nature both of God and man; and, besides, that spirit of tenderness and condescension which appeared in these letters plainly showed that the apostles and elders were herein under the guidance of him who is love itself. (2.) They increased in number daily. The imposing of the yoke of the ceremonial law upon their converts was enough to frighten people from them. If they had been disposed to turn Jews, they could have done that long since, before the apostles came among them; but, if they cannot be interested in the Christian privileges without submitting to the Jews' yoke, they will be as they are. But, if they find there is no danger of their being so enslaved, they are ready to embrace Christianity, and join themselves to the church. And thus the church increased in numbers daily; not a day passed but some or other gave up their names to Christ. And it is a joy to those who heartily wish well to the honour of Christ, and the welfare of the church and the souls of men, to see such an increase.

6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. 11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; 12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that

part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. 13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made: and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

In these verses we have,

I. Paul's travels up and down to do good. 1. He and Silas his colleague went throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, where, it should seem, the gospel was already planted, but whether by Paul's hand or no is not mentioned; it is likely it was, for in his epistle to the Galatians he speaks of his preaching the gospel to them at the first, and how very acceptable he was among them, Gal. iv. 13—15. And it appears by that epistle that the judaizing teachers had then done a great deal of mischief to these churches of Galatia, had prejudiced them against Paul and drawn them from the gospel of Christ, for which he there severely reproves them. But probably that was a great while after this. 2. They were forbidden at this time to preach the gospel in Asia (the country properly so called), because it did not need, other hands being at work there; or because the people were not yet prepared to receive it, as they were afterwards (ch. xix. 10), when all those that dwell in Asia heard the word of the Lord; or, as Dr. Lightfoot suggests, because at this time Christ would employ Paul in a piece of new work, which was to preach the gospel to a Roman colony at Philippi, for hitherto the Gentiles to whom he had preached were Greeks. The Romans were more particularly hated by the Jews than other Gentiles; their armies were the abomination of desolation; and therefore there is this among other things extraordinary in his call thither that he is forbidden to preach the gospel in Asia and other places, in order to his preaching it there, which is an intimation that the light of the gospel would in aftertimes be directed more westward than eastward. It was the Holy Ghost that forbade them, either by secret whispers in the minds of both of them, which, when they came to compare notes, they found to be the same, and to come from the same Spirit; or by some prophets who spoke to them from the



**Spirit.** The removals of ministers, and the dispensing of the means of grace by them, are in a particular manner under a divine guidance and direction. We find an Old-Testament minister forbidden to preach at all (Ezek. iii. 26): *Thou shalt be dumb*. But these New-Testament ministers are only forbidden to preach in one place, while they are directed to another where there is more need. 3. They would have gone into Bithynia, but were not permitted: *the Spirit suffered them not*, v. 7. They came to Mysia, and, as it should seem, preached the gospel there; for though it was a very mean contemptible country, even to a proverb (*Mysorum ultimus*, in Cicero, is a most despicable man), yet the apostles disdained not to visit it, owning themselves debtors both to the wise and to the unwise, Rom. i. 14. In Bithynia was the city of Nice, where the first general council was held against the Arians; into these countries Peter sent his epistle (1 Pet. i. 1); and there were flourishing churches here, for, though they had not the gospel sent them now, they had it in their turn, not long after. Observe, Though their judgment and inclination were to go into Bithynia, yet, having then extraordinary ways of knowing the mind of God, they were overruled by them, contrary to their own mind. We must now follow providence, and submit to the guidance of that pillar of cloud and fire; and, if this *suffer us not* to do what we assay to do, we ought to acquiesce, and believe it for the best. *The Spirit of Jesus* suffered them not; so many ancient copies read it. The servants of the Lord Jesus ought to be always under the check and conduct of the *Spirit of the Lord Jesus*, by whom he governs men's minds. 4. They *passed by Mysia*, or *passed through it* (so some), sowing good seed, we may suppose, as they went along; and they came down to Troas, the city of Troy, so much talked of, or the country thereabouts, which took its denomination from it. Here a church was planted; for here we find one in being, ch. xx. 6, 7, and probably planted at this time, and in a little time. It should seem that at Troas Luke fell in with Paul, and joined himself to his company; for henceforward, for the most part, when he speaks of Paul's journeys, he puts himself into the number of his retinue, *we went*, v. 10.

II. Paul's particular call to Macedonia, that is, to Philippi, the chief city, inhabited mostly by Romans, as appears, v. 21. Here we have,

1. The vision Paul had, v. 9. Paul had many visions, sometimes to encourage, sometimes, as here, to direct him in his work. An angel appeared to him, to intimate to him that it was the will of Christ he should go to Macedonia. Let him not be discouraged by the embargo laid upon him once and again, by which his designs were crossed; for, though he shall not go where he has a mind to

go, he shall go where God has work for him to do. Now observe, (1.) The person Paul saw. There stood by him a man of Macedonia, who by his habit or dialect seemed so to Paul, or who told him he was so. The angel, some think, assumed the shape of such a man; or, as others think, impressed upon Paul's fancy, when between asleep and awake, the image of such a man: he dreamt he saw such a one. Christ would have Paul directed to Macedonia, not as the apostles were at other times, by a messenger from heaven, to send him thither, but by a messenger thence to call him thither, because in this way he would afterwards ordinarily direct the motions of his ministers, by inclining the hearts of those who needed them to invite them. Paul shall be called to Macedonia by a man of Macedonia, and by him speaking in the name of the rest. Some make this man to be the tutelar angel of Macedonia, supposing angels to have charge of particular places as well as persons, and that so much is intimated Dan. x. 20, where we read of the *princes of Persia and Grecia*, that seem to have been angels. But there is no certainty of this. There was presented either to Paul's eyes or to his mind a man of Macedonia. The angel must not preach the gospel himself to the Macedonians, but must bring Paul to them. Nor must he by the authority of an angel order him to go, but in the person of a Macedonian court him to come. A man of Macedonia, not a magistrate of the country, much less a priest (Paul was not accustomed to receive invitations from such) but an ordinary inhabitant of that country, a plain man, that carried in his countenance marks of probity and seriousness, that did not come to banter Paul nor trifle with him, but in good earnest and with all earnestness to importune his assistance. (2.) The invitation given him. This honest Macedonian *prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us*; that is, "Come and preach the gospel to us; let us have the benefit of thy labours."

[1.] "*Thou hast helped many*; we have heard of those in this and the other country to whom thou hast been very useful; and why may we not put in for a share? O come and help us." The benefits others have received from the gospel should quicken our enquiries, our further enquiries, after it.

[2.] "It is thy business, and it is thy delight, to help poor souls; thou art a physician for the sick, that art to be ready at the call of every patient; O come and help us." [3.]

"We have need of thy help, as much as any people; we in Macedonia are as ignorant and as careless in religion as any people in the world are, are as idolatrous and as vicious as any, and as ingenious and industrious to ruin ourselves as any; and therefore, O come, come with all speed among us. *If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.*" [4.] "Those few among us that have any sense of divine things, and any con-



cern for their own souls and the souls of others, have done what can be done, by the help of natural light; I have done my part for one. We have carried the matter as far as it will go, to persuade our neighbours to fear and worship God, but we can do little good among them. *O come come, thou over, and help us.* The gospel thou preachest has arguments and powers beyond those we have yet been furnished with." [5.] "Do not only help us with thy prayers here: this will not do; thou must come over and help us." Note, People have great need of help for their souls, and it is their duty to look out for it and invite those among them that can help them.

2. The interpretation made of the vision (v. 10): They gathered assuredly from this that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel there; and they were ready to go wherever God directed. Note, We may sometimes infer a call of God from a call of man. If a man of Macedonia says, *Come and help us*, Paul thence gathers assuredly that God says, Go and help them. Ministers may go on with great cheerfulness and courage in their work when they perceive Christ calling them, not only to preach the gospel, but to preach it at this time, in this place, to this people.

III. Paul's voyage to Macedonia hereupon: He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but followed this divine direction much more cheerfully, and with more satisfaction, than he would have followed any contrivance or inclination of his own. 1. Thitherward he turned his thoughts. Now that he knows the mind of God in the matter he is determined, for this is all he wanted; now he thinks no more of Asia, nor Bithynia, but immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia. Paul only had the vision, but he communicated it to his companions, and they all, upon the credit of this, resolved for Macedonia. As Paul will follow Christ, so all his will follow him, or rather follow Christ with him. They are getting things in readiness for this expedition immediately, without delay. Note, God's calls must be complied with immediately. As our obedience must not be disputed, so it must not be deferred; do it to-day, lest thy heart be hardened. Observe, They could not immediately go into Macedonia; but they immediately endeavoured to go. If we cannot be so quick as we would be in our performances, yet we may be in our endeavours, and this shall be accepted. 2. Thitherward he steered his course. They set sail by the first shipping and with the first fair wind from Troas; for they may be sure they have done what they had to do there when God calls them to another place. They came with a straight course, a prosperous voyage, to Samothracia; the next day they came to Neapolis, a city on the confines of Thrace and Macedonia; and at last they landed at Philippi, a city so called from Philip king of Macedon, the father of Alex-

ander the Great; it is said (v. 12) to be, (1.) *The chief city of that part of Macedonia*; or, as some read it, *the first city*, the first they came to when they came from Troas. As an army that lands in a country of which they design to make themselves masters begin with the reduction of the first place they come to, so did Paul and his assistants: they began with the first city, because, if the gospel were received there, it would the more easily spread thence all the country over. (2.) It was a colony. The Romans not only had a garrison, but the inhabitants of the city were Romans, the magistrates at least, and the governing part. There were the greatest numbers and variety of people, and therefore the most likelihood of doing good.

IV. The cold entertainment which Paul and his companions met with at Philippi. One would have expected that having such a particular call from God thither they would have had a joyful welcome there, as Peter had with Cornelius when the angel sent him thither. Where was the man of Macedonia that begged Paul to come thither with all speed? Why did not he stir up his countrymen, some of them at least, to go and meet him? Why was not Paul introduced with solemnity, and the keys of the city put into his hand? Here is nothing like this; for, 1. It is a good while before any notice at all is taken of him: *We were in that city abiding certain days*, probably at a public house and at their own charge, for they had no friend to invite them so much as to a meal's meat, till Lydia welcomed them. They had made all the haste they could thither, but, now that they are there, they are almost tempted to think they might as well have staid where they were. But so it was ordered for their trial whether they could bear the pain of silence and lying by, when this was their lot. Those eminent and useful men are not fit to live in this world that know not how to be slighted and overlooked. Let not ministers think it strange if they be first strongly invited to a place, and then looked shyly upon when they come. 2. When they have an opportunity of preaching it is in an obscure place, and to a mean and small auditory, v. 13. There was no synagogue of the Jews there, for aught that appears, to be a door of entrance to them, and they never went to the idol-temples of the Gentiles, to preach to the auditories there; but here, upon enquiry, they found out a little meeting of good women, *that were proselytes of the gate*, who would be thankful to them if they would give them a sermon. The place of this meeting is out of the city; there it was connived at, but would not be suffered any where within the walls. It was a place where prayer was wont to be made; *προσευχή*—where an oratory or house of prayer was (so some), a chapel, or smaller synagogue. But I rather take it, as we read it, where prayer was appointed or accustomed to be. Those that worshipped the true God, and would not



worship idols, met there to pray together, and, according to the description of the most ancient and universal devotion, *to call upon the name of the Lord*. Each of them prayed apart every day; this was always the practice of those that worshipped God: but, besides this, *they came together on the sabbath day*. Though they were but a few and discountenanced by the town, though their meeting was at some distance, though, for aught that appears, there were none but women, yet a solemn assembly the worshippers of God must have, if by any means it be possible, on the sabbath day. When we cannot do as we would we must do as we can; if we have not synagogues, we must be thankful for more private places, and resort to them, *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, according to our opportunities are. This place is said to be *by a river side*, which perhaps was chosen, as befriending contemplation. Idolaters are said *to take their lot among the smooth stones of the stream*, Isa. lvii. 6. But these proselytes had in their eye, perhaps, the example of those prophets who had their visions, one by the *river of Chebar* (Ezek. i. 1), another by the *great river Hiddekel*, Dan. x. 4. Thither Paul and Silas and Luke went, and *sat down*, to instruct the congregation, that they might the better pray with them. They *spoke unto the women who resorted thither*, encouraged them in practising according to the light they had, and led them on further to the knowledge of Christ.

V. The conversion of *Lydia*, who probably was the first that was wrought upon there to believe in Christ, though not the last. In this story of *the Acts*, we have not only the conversion of places recorded, but of many particular persons; for such is the worth of souls that the reducing of one to God is a great matter. Nor have we only the conversions that were effected by miracle, as Paul's, but some that were brought about by the ordinary methods of grace, as *Lydia's* here. Observe,

1. Who this convert was that there is such particular notice taken of. Four things are recorded of her:—

(1.) Her name, *Lydia*. It is an honour to her to have her name recorded here in the book of God, so that *wherever the scriptures are read there shall this be told concerning her*. Note, The names of the saints are precious with God, and should be so with us; we cannot have our names recorded in the Bible, but, if God open our hearts, we shall find them *written in the book of life*, and this is better (Phil. iv. 3) and more *to be rejoiced in*, Luke x. 20.

(2.) Her calling. She was a *seller of purple*, either of purple dye or of purple cloth or silk. Observe, [1.] She had a calling, an honest calling, which the historian takes notice of to her praise; she was none of those women that the apostle speaks of (1 Tim. v. 13), *who learn to be idle, and not only idle, &c.*

[2.] It was a mean calling. She was a *seller of purple*, not a wearer of purple, few such are called. The notice here taken of this is an intimation to those who are employed in honest callings, if they be honest in the management of them, not to be ashamed of them.

[3.] Though she had a calling to mind, yet she was a worshipper of God, and found time to improve advantages for her soul. The business of our particular callings may be made to consist very well with the business of religion, and therefore it will not excuse us from religious exercises alone, and in our families, or in solemn assemblies, to say, We have shops to look after, and a trade to mind; for have we not also a God to serve and a soul to look after? Religion does not call us from our business in the world, but directs us in it. Every thing in its time and place.

(3.) The place she was of—*of the city of Thyatira*, which was a great way from Philippi; there she was born and bred, but either married at Philippi, or brought by her trade to settle there. The providence of God, as it always appoints, so it often removes, *the bounds of our habitation*, and sometimes makes the change of our outward condition or place of our abode wonderfully subservient to the designs of his grace concerning our salvation. Providence brings *Lydia* to Philippi, to be under Paul's ministry, and there, where she met with it, she made a good use of it; so should we improve opportunities.

(4.) Her religion before the Lord opened her heart. [1.] She worshipped God according to the knowledge she had; she was one of the devout women. Sometimes the grace of God wrought upon those who, before their conversion, were very wicked and vile, publicans and harlots; *such were some of you*, 1 Cor. vi. 11. But sometimes it fastened upon those who were of a good character, who had some good in them, as the eunuch, Cornelius, and *Lydia*. Note, It is not enough to be worshippers of God, but we must be believers in Jesus Christ, for there is no coming to God as a Father but by him as Mediator. But those who worshipped God according to the light they had stood fair for the discoveries of Christ, and his grace to them; for *to him that has shall be given*: and to them Christ would be welcome; for those that know what it is to worship God see their need of Christ, and know what use to make of his mediation. [2.] She heard the apostles. Here, where prayer was made, when there was an opportunity, *the word was preached*: for hearing the word of God is a part of religious worship, and how can we expect God should hear our prayers if we will not hearken to his word? Those that worshipped God according to the light they had looked out for further light; we must improve the *day of small things*, but must not rest in it.

2. What the work was that was wrought upon her. *Whose heart the Lord opened*. Ob-



serve here, (1.) The author of this work: it was *the Lord*,—the Lord Christ, to whom this judgment is committed,—the Spirit of the Lord, who is the sanctifier. Note, Conversion-work is God's work; it is he *that works in us both to will and to do*; not as if we had nothing to do, but of ourselves, without God's grace, we can do nothing; nor as if God were in the least chargeable with the ruin of those that perish, but the salvation of those that are saved must be wholly ascribed to him. (2.) The seat of this work; it is in the heart that the change is made, it is to the heart that this blessed turn is given; it was the heart of Lydia that was wrought upon. Conversion-work is heart-work; it is a *renewing of the heart, the inward man, the spirit of the mind*. (3.) The nature of the work; she had not only her heart touched, but her heart opened. An unconverted soul is shut up, and fortified against Christ, *straitly shut up*, as Jericho against Joshua, Josh. vi. 1. Christ, in dealing with the soul, knocks at the door that is shut against him (Rev. iii. 20); and, when a sinner is effectually persuaded to embrace Christ, *then the heart is opened for the King of glory to come in*—the understanding is opened to receive the divine light, the will opened to receive the divine law, and the affections opened to receive the divine love. When the heart is thus opened to Christ, the ear is opened to his word, the lips opened in prayer, the hand opened in charity, and the steps enlarged in all manner of gospel obedience.

3. What were the effects of this work on the heart. (1.) She took great notice of the word of God. Her heart was so *opened that she attended to the things that were spoken by Paul*; she not only gave attendance on Paul's preaching, but gave attention to it; *she applied to herself* (so some read it) *the things that were spoken by Paul*; and then only the word does us good, and makes an abiding impression upon us, when we apply it to ourselves. Now this was an evidence of the opening of her heart, and was the fruit of it; wherever the heart is opened by the grace of God, it will appear by a diligent attendance on, and attention to, the word of God, both for Christ's sake, whose word it is, and for our own sakes, who are so nearly interested in it. (2.) She gave up her name to Jesus Christ, and took upon her the profession of his holy religion: *She was baptized*, and by this solemn rite was admitted a member of the church of Christ; and with her *her household* also was baptized, those of them that were infants in her right, for if *the root be holy so are the branches*, and those that were grown up by her influence and authority. She and her household were baptized by the same rule that Abraham and his household were circumcised, because the seal of the covenant belongs to the covenanters and their seed. (3.) She was very kind to the ministers, and very desirous to be further instruct-

ed by them in *the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*: *She besought us saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, if you take me to be a sincere Christian, manifest your confidence in me by this, come into my house, and abide there."* Thus she desired an opportunity, [1.] To testify her gratitude to those who had been the instruments of divine grace in this blessed change that was wrought upon her. When her heart was open to Christ, her house was open to his ministers for his sake, and they were welcome to the best entertainment she had, which she did not think too good for those of whose spiritual things she had reaped so plentifully. Nay, they are not only welcome to her house, but she is extremely pressing and importunate with them: *She constrained us*; which intimates that Paul was very backward and unwilling to go, because he was afraid of being burdensome to the families of the young converts, and would study to *make the gospel of Christ without charge* (1 Cor. ix. 18; Acts xx. 34), that those who were without might have no occasion given them to reproach the preachers of the gospel as designing, self-seeking men, and that those who were within might have no occasion to complain of the expenses of their religion. but Lydia will have no nay; she will not believe that they take her to be a sincere Christian unless they will oblige her herein; like Abraham inviting the angels (Gen. xviii. 3), *If now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant*. [2.] She desired an opportunity of receiving further instruction. If she might but have them for awhile in her family, she might hear them daily (Prov. viii. 34), and not merely on sabbath days at the meeting. In her own house she might not only hear them, but ask them questions; and she might have them to pray with her daily, and to bless her household. Those that know something of Christ cannot but desire to know more, and seek opportunities of increasing their acquaintance with his gospel.

16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: 17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. 18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. 19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught



Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the marketplace unto the rulers, 20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*. 23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Paul and his companions, though they were for some time buried in obscurity at Philippi, yet now begin to be taken notice of.

1. *A damsel that had a spirit of divination* caused them to be taken notice of, by proclaiming them to be the servants of God. Observe,

1. The account that is given of this damsel: She was *pythonissa*, possessed with such a *spirit of divination* as that damsel was by whom the oracles of Apollo at Delphos were delivered; she was actuated by an evil spirit, that dictated ambiguous answers to those who consulted her, which served to gratify their vain desire of knowing things to come, but often deceived them. In those times of ignorance, infidelity, and idolatry, the devil, by the divine permission, thus led men captive at his will; and he could not have gained such adoration from them as he had, if he had not pretended to give oracles to them, for by both his usurpation is maintained as the god of this world. This damsel brought her masters much gain by soothsaying; many came to consult this witch for the discovery of robberies, the finding of things lost, and especially to be told their fortune, and none came but with the rewards of divination in their hands, according to the quality of the person and the importance of the case. Probably there were many that were thus kept for fortune-tellers, but, it should seem, this was more in repute than any of them; for, while others brought some gain, this brought much gain to her masters, being consulted more than any other.

2. The testimony which this damsel gave to Paul and his companions: She met them in the street, as they were going to prayer, to the house of prayer, or rather to the work of prayer there; v. 16. They went thither publicly, every body knew whither they were going, and what they were going to do. If

what she did was likely to be any distraction to them, or a hindrance in their work, it is observable how subtle Satan is, that great tempter, in taking the opportunity to give us diversion when we are going about any religious exercises, to ruffle us and to put us out of temper when we need to be most composed. When she met with them she followed them, crying, "*These men, how contemptible soever they look and are looked upon, are great men, for they are the servants of the most high God, and men that should be very welcome to us, for they show unto us the way of salvation, both the salvation that will be our happiness, and the way to it that will be our holiness.*"

Now, (1.) This witness is true; it is a comprehensive encomium on the faithful preachers of the gospel, and makes their feet beautiful, Rom. x. 15. Though they are men subject to like passions as we are, and earthen vessels, yet, [1.] "They are the servants of the most high God; they attend on him, are employed by him, and are devoted to his honour, as servants; they come to us on his errands, the message they bring is from him, and they serve the purposes and interests of his kingdom. The gods we Gentiles worship are inferior beings, therefore not gods, but these men belong to the supreme Numen, to the most high God, who is over all men, over all gods, who made us all, and to whom we are all accountable. They are his servants, and therefore it is our duty to respect them, and hearken to them for their Master's sake, and it is at our peril if we affront them." [2.] "They show unto us the way of salvation." Even the heathen had some notion of the miserable deplorable state of mankind, and their need of salvation, and it was what they made some enquiries after. "Now," saith she, "these are the men that show us what we have in vain sought for in our superstitious profitless application to our priests and oracles." Note, God has, in the gospel of his Son, plainly shown us the way of salvation, has told us what we must do that we may be delivered from the misery to which by sin we have exposed ourselves.

But, (2.) How came this testimony from the mouth of one that had a spirit of divination? Is Satan divided against himself? Will he cry up those whose business it is to pull him down? We may take it either, [1.] As extorted from this spirit of divination for the honour of the gospel by the power of God; as the devil was forced to say of Christ (Mark i. 24): *I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.* The truth is sometimes magnified by the confession of its adversaries, in which they are witnesses against themselves. Christ would have this testimony of the damsel to rise up in judgment against those at Philippi who slighted and persecuted the apostles; though the gospel needed no such testimony, yet it shall serve to add to their commendation that the damsel whom

they looked upon as an oracle in other things proclaimed the apostles God's servants. Or, [2.] As designed by the evil spirit, that subtle serpent, to the dishonour of the gospel; some think she designed hereby to gain credit to herself and her prophecies, and so to increase her master's profit by pretending to be in the interest of the apostles, who, she thought, had a growing reputation, or to curry favour with Paul, that he might not separate her and her familiar. Others think that Satan, who can transform himself into an angel of light, and can say any thing to serve a turn, designed hereby to disgrace the apostles; as if these divines were of the same fraternity with their diviners, because they were witnessed to by them, and then the people might as well adhere to those they had been used to. Those that were most likely to receive the apostles' doctrine were such as were prejudiced against these spirits of divination, and therefore would, by this testimony, be prejudiced against the gospel; and, as for those who regarded these diviners, the devil thought himself sure of them.

II. Christ caused them to be taken notice of, by giving them power to cast the devil out of this damsel. She continued *many days* clamouring thus (v. 18); and, it should seem. Paul took no notice of her, not knowing but it might be ordered of God for the service of his cause, that she should thus witness concerning his ministers; but finding perhaps that it did them a prejudice, rather than any service, he soon silenced her, by casting the devil out of her. 1. He was *grieved*. It troubled him to see the damsel made an instrument of Satan to deceive people, and to see the people imposed upon by her divinations. It was a disturbance to him to hear a sacred truth so profaned, and good words come out of such a wicked mouth with such an evil design. Perhaps they were spoken in an ironical bantering way, as ridiculing the apostles' pretensions, and mocking them, as when Christ's persecutors complimented him with *Hail, king of the Jews*; and then justly might Paul be grieved, as any good man's heart would be, to hear any good truth of God bawled out in the streets in a canting jeering way. 2. He *commanded the evil spirit to come out of her*. He turned with a holy indignation, angry both at the flatteries and at the reproaches of the *unclean spirit*, and said, *I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her*; and by this he will show that these men are the servants of the living God, and are able to prove themselves so, without her testimony: her silence shall demonstrate it more than her speaking could do. Thus Paul shows the way of salvation indeed, that it is by breaking the power of Satan, and chaining him up, that he may not deceive the world (Rev. xx. 3), and that this salvation is to be obtained in the name of Jesus Christ only, as in his name the devil was now cast out and by no other. It was a

great blessing to the country when Christ by a word cast the devil out of those in whom he frightened people and molested them, so that no man might pass by that way (Matt. viii. 28); but it was a much greater kindness to the country when Paul now, in Christ's name, cast the devil out of one who deceived people and imposed upon their credulity. Power went along with the word of Christ, before which Satan could not stand, but was forced to quit his hold, and in this case it was a strong hold: *He came out the same hour*.

III. The masters of the damsel that was dispossessed caused them to be taken notice of, by bringing them before the magistrates for doing it, and laying it to their charge as their crime. The preachers of the gospel would never have had an opportunity of speaking to the magistrates if they had not been brought before them as evil doers. Observe here,

1. That which provoked them was, that, the damsel being restored to herself, *her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone*, v. 19. See here what evil the love of money is the root of! If the preaching of the gospel ruin the craft of the silversmiths (ch. xix. 24) much more the craft of the soothsayers; and therefore here is a great outcry raised, when Satan's power to deceive is broken: the priests hated the gospel because it turned men from the blind service of dumb idols, and so the hope of their gains was gone. The power of Christ, which appeared in dispossessing the woman, and the great kindness done to her in delivering her out of Satan's hand, made no impression upon them when they apprehended that they should hereby lose money.

2. The course they took with them was to incense the higher powers against them, as men fit to be punished: *They caught them as they went along, and, with the utmost fury and violence, dragged them into the marketplace*, where public justice was administered. (1.) They brought them to the rulers, their justices of peace, to do by them as men taken into the hands of the law, the *duumviri*. (2.) From them they hurried them to the magistrates, the prætors or governors of the city, *τοῖς στρατηγοῖς*—the officers of the army, so the word signifies; but it is taken in general for the judges or chief rulers: to them they brought their complaint.

3. The charge they exhibited against them was that they were the troublers of the land, v. 20. They take it for granted that these men are Jews, a nation at this time as much an abomination to the Romans as they had long ago been to the Egyptians. Piteous was the case of the apostles, when it was turned to their reproach that they were Jews, and yet the Jews were their most violent persecutors! (1.) The general charge against them is that they troubled the city, sowed discord, and disturbed the public peace, and occasioned riots and tumults, than which nothing



could be more false and unjust, as was Ahab's character of Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 17): *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* If they troubled the city, it was but like the angel's troubling the water of Bethesda's pool, in order to healing—shaking, in order to a happy settlement. Thus those that rouse the sluggards are exclaimed against for troubling them. (2.) The proof of this charge is their teaching customs not proper to be admitted by a Roman colony, v. 21. The Romans were always very jealous of innovations in religion. Right or wrong, they would adhere to that, how vain soever, which they had received by tradition from their fathers. No foreign nor upstart deity must be allowed, without the approbation of the senate; the gods of their country must be their gods, true or false. This was one of the laws of the twelve tables. *Hath a nation changed their gods?* It incensed them against the apostles that they taught a religion destructive of polytheism and idolatry, and preached to them to turn from those vanities. This the Romans could not bear. "If this grow upon us, in a little while we shall lose our religion."

IV. The magistrates, by their proceedings against them, caused them to be taken notice of.

1. By countenancing the persecution they raised the mob upon them (v. 22): *The multitude rose up together against them*, and were ready to pull them to pieces. It has been the artifice of Satan to make God's ministers and people odious to the commonalty, by representing them as dangerous men, who aimed at the destruction of the constitution and the changing of the customs, when really there has been no ground for such an imputation.

2. By going on to an execution they further represented them as the vilest malefactors: *They rent off their clothes*, with rage and fury, not having patience till they were taken off, in order to their being scourged. This the apostle refers to when he speaks of *their being shamefully treated at Philippi*, 1 Thess. ii. 2. The magistrates commanded that they should be whipped as vagabonds, by the lictors or beadles who attended the prætors, and carried rods with them for that purpose; this was one of those three times that Paul was beaten with rods, according to the Roman usage, which was not under the compassionate limitation of the number of stripes not to exceed forty, which was provided by the Jewish law. It is here said that *they laid many stripes upon them* (v. 23), without counting how many, because they seemed vile unto them, Deut. xxv. 3. Now, one would think, this might have satiated their cruelty; if they must be whipped, surely they must be discharged. No, they are imprisoned, and it is probable the present purpose was to try them for their lives, and put them to death; else why should there be such care taken to prevent their escape?

(1.) The judges made their commitment very strict: *They charged the jailer to keep them safely*, and have a very watchful eye upon them, as if they were dangerous men, that either would venture to break prison themselves or were in confederacy with those that would attempt to rescue them. Thus they endeavoured to render them odious, that they might justify themselves in the base usage they had given them. (2.) The jailer made their confinement very severe (v. 24): *Having received such a charge*, though he might have kept them safely enough in the outer prison, yet *he thrust them into the inner prison*. He was sensible that the magistrates had a great indignation against these men, and were inclined to be severe with them, and therefore he thought to ingratiate himself with them, by exerting his power likewise against them to the uttermost. When magistrates are cruel, it is no wonder that the officers under them are so too. *He put them into the inner prison*, the dungeon, into which none were usually put but condemned malefactors, dark at noon-day, damp and cold, dirty, it is likely, and every way offensive, like that into which Jeremiah was let down (Jer. xxxviii. 6); and, as if this were not enough, *he made their feet fast in the stocks*. Perhaps, having heard a report of the escape of the preachers of the gospel out of prison, when the doors were fast barred (ch. v. 19; xii. 9), he thought he would be wiser than other jailers had been, and therefore would effectually secure them by fastening them in the stocks; and they were not the first of God's messengers that had their feet in the stocks; Jeremiah was so treated, and publicly too, in the high-gate of Benjamin (Jer. xx. 2); Joseph had his feet hurt with fetters, Ps. cv. 18. Oh what hard usage have God's servants met with, as in the former days, so in the latter times! Witness the Book of Martyrs, martyrs in queen Mary's time.

25' And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell

down before Paul and Silas, 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

We have here the designs of the persecutors of Paul and Silas baffled and broken.

I. The persecutors designed to dishearten and discourage the preachers of the gospel, and to make them sick of the cause and weary of their work; but here we find them both hearty and heartened.

1. They were themselves hearty, wonderfully hearty; never were poor prisoners so truly cheerful, nor so far from laying their hard usage to heart. Let us consider what their case was. The prætors among the Romans had rods carried before them, and axes bound upon them, the *fascies* and *secures*. Now they had felt the smart of the rods, *the ploughers had ploughed upon their backs, and made long furrows*. The many stripes they had laid upon them were very sore, and one might have expected to hear them complaining of them, of the rawness and soreness of their backs and shoulders. Yet this was not all; they had reason to fear the axes next. Their Master was first scourged and then crucified; and they might expect the same. In the mean time they were in the inner prison, their feet in the stocks, which, some think, not only held them, but hurt them; and yet, *at midnight*, when they should have been trying, if possible, to get a little rest, they *prayed and sang praises to God*. (1.) They prayed together, prayed to God to support them and comfort them in their afflictions, to visit them, as he did Joseph in the prison, and to be with them,—prayed that their consolations in Christ might abound, as their afflictions for him did,—prayed that even their bonds and stripes might turn to the furtherance of the gospel,—prayed for their persecutors, that God would forgive them and turn their hearts. This was not at an hour of prayer, but at midnight; it was not in a house of prayer, but in a dungeon; yet it was seasonable to pray, and the prayer was acceptable. As in the dark, so out of the depths, we may cry unto God. No place, no time, amiss for prayer, if the heart be lifted up to God. Those that are companions in suffering should join in

prayer. *Is any afflicted? Let him pray*. No trouble, how grievous soever, should indispose us for prayer. (2.) *They sang praises to God*. They praised God; for we must *in every thing give thanks*. We never want matter for praise, if we do not want a heart. And what should put the heart of a child of God out of tune for this duty if a dungeon and a pair of stocks will not do it? They praised God that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, and that they were so wonderfully supported and borne up under their sufferings, and felt divine consolations so sweet, so strong, in their souls. *Nay, they not only praised God, but they sang praises to him*, in some psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song, either one of David's, or some modern composition, or one of their own, *as the Spirit gave them utterance*. As our rule is that the afflicted should pray, and therefore, being in affliction, they prayed; so our rule is that the merry should sing psalms (James v. 13), and therefore, being merry in their affliction, *merry after a godly sort, they sang psalms*. This proves that the singing of psalms is a gospel ordinance, and ought to be used by all good Christians; and that it is instituted, not only for the expressing of their joys in a day of triumph, but for the balancing and relieving of their sorrows in a day of trouble. It was at midnight that they sang psalms, according to the example of the sweet psalmist of Israel (Ps. cxix. 62): *At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee*. (3.) Notice is here taken of the circumstance that *the prisoners heard them*. If the prisoners did not hear them pray, yet *they heard them sing praises*. [1.] It intimates how hearty they were in singing praises to God; they sang so loud that, though they were in the dungeon, they were heard all the prison over; nay, so loud that they woke the prisoners: for we may suppose, being at midnight, they were all asleep. We should sing psalms with all our heart. The saints are called upon to sing aloud upon their beds, Ps. cxlix. 5. But gospel grace carries the matter further, and gives us an example of those that sang aloud in the prison, in the stocks. [2.] Though they knew the prisoners would hear them, yet they sang aloud, as those that were not ashamed of their Master, nor of his service. Shall those that would sing psalms in their families plead, in excuse for their omission of the duty, that they are afraid their neighbours should hear them, when those that sing profane songs roar them out, and care not who hears them? [3.] The prisoners were made to hear the prison-songs of Paul and Silas, that they might be prepared for the miraculous favour shown to them all for the sake of Paul and Silas, when *the prison-doors were thrown open*. By this extraordinary comfort with which they were filled it was published that he whom they preached was *the consolation of Israel*. Let the prisoners that mean to oppose him hear



and tremble before him; let those that are faithful to him hear and triumph, and take of the comfort that is spoken to the prisoners of hope, Zech. ix. 12.

2. God heartened them wonderfully by his signal appearances for them, v. 26. (1.) There was immediately a great earthquake; how far it extended we are not told, but it was such a violent shock in this place that the very foundations of the prison were shaken. While the prisoners were hearkening to the midnight devotions of Paul and Silas, and perhaps laughing at them and making a jest of them, this earthquake would strike a terror upon them, and convince them that those men were the favourites of Heaven, and such as God owned. We had the house of prayer shaken, in answer to prayer, and as a token of God's acceptance of it, ch. iv. 31. Here the prison shaken. The Lord was in these earthquakes, to show his resentment of the indignities done to his servants, to testify to those whose confidence is in the earth the weakness and instability of that in which they confide, and to teach people that, though the earth be moved, yet they need not fear. (2.) The prison-doors were thrown open, and the prisoners' fetters were knocked off: Every man's bands were loosed. Perhaps the prisoners, when they heard Paul and Silas pray and sing psalms, admired them, and spoke honourably of them, and said what the damsel had said of them, Surely, these men are the servants of the living God. To recompense them for, and confirm them in, their good opinion of them, they share in the miracle, and have their bands loosed; as afterwards God gave to Paul all those that were in the ship with him (ch. xxvii. 24), so now he gave him all those that were in the prison with him. God hereby signified to these prisoners, as Grotius observes, that the apostles, in preaching the gospel, were public blessings to mankind, as they proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to those that were bound, Isa. lxi. 1. *Et per eos solvi animorum vincula—and as by them the bonds of souls were unloosed.*

II. The persecutors designed to stop the progress of the gospel, that no more might embrace it; thus they hoped to ruin the meeting by the river side, that no more hearts should be opened there; but here we find converts made in the prison, that house turned into a meeting, the trophies of the gospel's victories erected there, and the jailer, their own servant, become a servant of Christ. It is probable that some of the prisoners, if not all, were converted; surely the miracle wrought on their bodies, in loosing their hands, was wrought on their souls too. See Job xxxvi. 8.—10; Ps. cvii. 14, 15. But it is only the conversion of the jailer that is recorded.

1. He is afraid he shall lose his life, and Paul makes him easy as to this care, v. 27, 28. (1.) He awoke out of his sleep. It is

probable that the shock of the earthquake woke him, and the opening of the prison-doors, and the prisoners' expressions of joy and amazement, when in the dark they found their bands loosed, and called to tell one another what they felt: this was enough to awaken the jailer, whose place required that he should not be hard to wake. This waking him out of his sleep signified the awakening of his conscience out of its spiritual slumber. The call of the gospel is, *Awake, thou that sleepest* (Eph. v. 14), like that of Jonah, i. 6. (2.) He saw the prison-doors open, and supposed, as well he might, that the prisoners had fled; and then what would become of him? He knew the Roman law in that case, and it was executed not long ago upon the keepers out of whose hands Peter escaped, ch. xii. 19. It was according to that of the prophet, 1 Kings xx. 39, 42, *Keep this man; if he be missing, thy life shall go for his life.* The Roman lawyers after this, in their readings upon the law, *De custodia reorum—The custody of criminals* (which appoints that the keeper should undergo the same punishment that should have been inflicted on the prisoner if he let him escape), take care to except an escape by miracle. (3.) In his fright he drew his sword, and was going to kill himself, to prevent a more terrible death, an expected one, a pompous ignominious death, which he knew he was liable to for letting his prisoners escape and not looking better to them; and the extraordinarily strict charge which the magistrates gave him concerning Paul and Silas made him conclude they would be very severe upon him if they were gone. The philosophers generally allowed self-murder. Seneca prescribes it as the last remedy which those that are in distress may have recourse to. The Stoics, notwithstanding their pretended conquest of the passions, yielded thus far to them. And the Epicureans, who indulged the pleasures of sense, to avoid its pains chose rather to put an end to it. This jailer thought there was no harm in anticipating his own death; but Christianity proves itself to be of God by this, that it keeps us to the law of our creation—revives, enforces, and establishes it, obliges us to be just to our own lives, and teaches us cheerfully to resign them to our graces, but courageously to hold them out against our corruptions. (4.) Paul stopped him from his proceeding against himself (v. 28): He cried with a loud voice, not only to make him hear, but to make him heed, saying, *Do not practise any evil to thyself; Do thyself no harm.* All the cautions of the word of God against sin, and all appearances of it and approaches to it, have this tendency, "*Do thyself no harm.* Man, woman, do not wrong thyself, nor ruin thyself; hurt not thyself, and then none else can hurt thee; do not sin, for nothing else can hurt thee." Even as to the body, we are cautioned against those sins which do harm to it, and

are taught not to *hate our own flesh, but to nourish and cherish it*. The jailer needs not fear being called to an account for the escape of his prisoners, for *they are all here*. It was strange that some of them did not slip away, when the prison-doors were opened, and they were loosed from their bands; but their amazement held them fast, and, being sensible it was by the prayers of Paul and Silas that they were loosed, they would not stir unless they stirred; and God showed his power in binding their spirits, as much as in loosing their feet.

2. He is afraid he shall lose his soul, and Paul makes him easy as to this care too. One concern leads him to another, and a much greater; and, being hindered from hastening himself out of this world, he begins to think, if he had pursued his intention, whither death would have brought him, and what would have become of him on the other side death—a very proper thought for such as have been snatched as a brand out of the fire, when there was but a step between them and death. Perhaps the heinousness of the sin he was running into helped to alarm him.

(1.) Whatever was the cause, he was put into a great consternation. The Spirit of God, that was sent to convince, in order to his being a Comforter, struck a terror upon him, and startled him. Whether he took care to shut the prison-doors again we are not told. Perhaps he forgot this as the woman of Samaria, when Christ had impressed convictions on her conscience, *left her water-pot* and forgot her errand to the well; for *he called for a light* with all speed, and *sprang in* to the inner prison, and *came trembling to Paul and Silas*. Those that have sin set in order before them, and are made to know their abominations, cannot but tremble at the apprehension of their misery and danger. This jailer, when he was thus made to tremble, could not apply to a more proper person than to Paul, for it had once been his own case; he had been once a persecutor of good men, as this jailer was—had cast them into prison, as he kept them—and when, like him, he was made sensible of it, *he trembled, and was astonished*; and therefore he was able to speak the more feelingly to the jailer.

(2.) In this consternation, he applied to Paul and Silas for relief. Observe, [1.] How reverent and respectful his address to them is: *He called for a light*, because they were in the dark, and that they might see what a fright he was in; *he fell down before them*, as one amazed at the badness of his own condition, and ready to sink under the load of his terror because of it; he fell down before them, as one that had upon his spirit an awe of them, and of the image of God upon them, and of their commission from God. It is probable that he had heard what the damsel said of them, that they were *the servants of*

*the living God, who showed to them the way of salvation*, and as such he thus expressed his veneration for them. He fell down before them, to beg their pardon, as a penitent, for the indignities he had done them, and to beg their advice, as a supplicant, what he should do. He gave them a title of respect, *Sirs, κύριοι—lords, masters*; just now it was, *Rogues and villains*, and he was their master; but now, *Sirs, lords*, and they are his masters. Converting grace changes people's language of and to good people and good ministers; and, to such as are thoroughly convinced of sin, the very feet of those that bring tidings of Christ are beautiful; yea, though they are disgracefully fastened in the stocks. [2.] How serious his enquiry is: *What must I do to be saved?* *First*, His salvation is now his great concern, and lies nearest his heart, which before was the furthest thing from his thoughts. Not, *What shall I do to be preferred, to be rich and great in the world?* but, *What shall I do to be saved?* *Secondly*, He does not enquire concerning others, what they must do; but concerning himself, "What must I do?" It is his own precious soul that he is in care about: Let others do as they please; tell me what I must do, what course I must take." *Thirdly*, He is convinced that something must be done, and done by him too, in order to his salvation; that it is not a thing of course, a thing that will do itself, but a thing about which we must strive, wrestle, and take pains. He asks not, "What may be done for me?" but, "What shall I do, that, being now in fear and trembling, I may work out my salvation?" as Paul speaks in his epistle to the church at Philippi, of which this jailer was, perhaps with respect to his trembling enquiry here, intimating that he must not only ask after salvation (as he had done), but *work out his salvation with a holy trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. *Fourthly*, He is willing to do any thing: "Tell me what I must do, and I am here ready to do it. *Sirs*, put me into any way, if it be but the right way, and a sure way; though narrow, and thorny, and uphill, yet I will walk in it." Note, Those who are thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly concerned about their salvation, will surrender at discretion to Jesus Christ, will give him a blank to write what he pleases, will be glad to have Christ upon his own terms, Christ upon any terms. *Fifthly*, He is inquisitive what he should do, is desirous to know what he should do, and asks those that were likely to tell him. *If you will enquire, enquire ye*, Isa. xxi. 12. Those that set their faces Zionward must ask the way thither, Jer. l. 5. We cannot know it of ourselves, but God has made it known to us by his word, has appointed his ministers to assist us in consulting the scriptures, and has promised to *give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him*, to be their guide in the way of



salvation. *Sixthly*, He brought them out, to put this question to them, that their answer might not be by duress or compulsion, but that they might prescribe to him, though he was their keeper, with the same liberty as they did to others. He brings them out of the dungeon, in hopes they will bring him out of a much worse.

(3.) They very readily directed him what he must do, v. 31. They were always ready to answer such enquiries; though they are cold, and sore, and sleepy, they do not adjourn this cause to a more convenient time and place, do not bid him come to them the next sabbath at their meeting-place by the river side, and they will tell him, but they strike while the iron is hot, take him now when he is in a good mind, lest the conviction should wear off. Now that God begins to work, it is time for them to set in as *workers together with God*. They do not upbraid him with his rude and ill carriage towards them, and his going beyond his warrant; all this is forgiven and forgotten, and they are as glad to show him the way to heaven as the best friend they have. They did not triumph over him, though he trembled; they gave him the same directions they did to others, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. One would think they should have said, "Repent of thy abusing us, in the first place." No, that is overlooked and easily passed by, if he will but believe in Christ. This is an example to ministers to encourage penitents, to meet those that are coming to Christ and take them by the hand, not to be hard upon any for unkindness done to them, but to seek Christ's honour more than their own. Here is the sum of the whole gospel, the covenant of grace in a few words: *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*. Here is, [1.] The happiness promised: "*Thou shalt be saved*"; not only rescued from eternal ruin, but brought to eternal life and blessedness. Though thou art a *poor man*, an under-jailer or turnkey, mean and of low condition in the world, yet this shall be no bar to thy salvation. Though a great sinner, though a persecutor, yet thy heinous transgressions shall be all forgiven through the merits of Christ; and thy hard embittered heart shall be softened and sweetened by the grace of Christ, and thus thou shalt neither die for thy crime nor die of thy disease." [2.] The condition required: *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. We must admit the record that God hath given in his gospel concerning his Son, and assent to it as faithful, and well *worthy of all acceptation*. We must approve the method God has taken of reconciling the world to himself by a Mediator; and accept of Christ as he is offered to us, and give up ourselves to be ruled and taught and saved by him. This is the only way and a sure way to salvation. No other way of salvation than by Christ, and no other way of our being saved by Christ than by

believing in him; and no danger of coming short if we take this way, for it is the way that God has appointed, and he is faithful that has promised. It is the gospel that is to be preached to every creature, *He that believes shall be saved*. [3.] The extension of this to his family: *Thou shalt be saved, and thy house*; that is, "God will be in Christ a God to thee and to thy seed, as he was to Abraham. Believe, and salvation shall come to thy house, as Luke xix. 9. Those of thy house that are infants shall be admitted into the visible church with thee, and thereby put into a fair way for salvation; those that are grown up shall have the means of salvation brought to them, and, be they ever so many, let them believe in Jesus Christ and they shall be saved; they are all welcome to Christ upon the same terms."

(4.) They proceeded to instruct him and his family in the doctrine of Christ (v. 32; *They spoke unto him the word of the Lord*). He was, for aught that appears, an utter stranger to Christ, and therefore it is requisite he should be told who this Jesus is, that he may believe in him, John ix. 36. And, the substance of the matter lying in a little compass, they soon told him enough to make his being baptized a reasonable service. Christ's ministers should have the word of the Lord so ready to them, and so richly dwelling in them, as to be able to give instructions off-hand to any that desire to hear and receive them, for their direction in the way of salvation. They spoke the word not only to him, but to *all that were in his house*. Masters of families should take care that all under their charge partake of the means of knowledge and grace, and that the word of the Lord be spoken to them; for the souls of the poorest servants are as precious as those of their masters, and are bought with the same price.

(5.) The jailer and his family were immediately baptized, and thereby took upon them the profession of Christianity, submitted to its laws, and were admitted to its privileges, upon their declaring solemnly, as the eunuch did, that they believed that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*: He was baptized, he and *all his, straightway*. Neither he nor any of his family desired time to consider whether they should come into baptismal bonds or no; nor did Paul and Silas desire time to try their sincerity and to consider whether they should baptize them or no. But the Spirit of grace worked such a strong faith in them, all on a sudden, as superseded further debate; and Paul and Silas knew by the Spirit that it was a work of God that was wrought in them: so that there was no occasion for demur. This therefore will not justify such precipitation in ordinary cases.

(6.) The jailer was hereupon very respectful to Paul and Silas, as one that knew not how to make amends for the injury he had done to them, much less for the kindness he had received from them: *He took them the*



same hour of the night, would not let them lie a minute longer in the inner prison; but, [1.] He washed their stripes, to cool them, and abate the smart of them; to clean them from the blood which the stripes had fetched. It is probable that he bathed them with some healing liquor, as the good Samaritan helped the wounded man by pouring in oil and wine. [2.] He brought them into his house, bade them welcome to the best room he had, and prepared his best bed for them. Now nothing was thought good enough for them, as before nothing bad enough. [3.] He set meat before them, such as his house would afford, and they were welcome to it, by which he expressed the welcome which his soul gave to the gospel. They had spoken to him the word of the Lord, had broken the bread of life to him and his family; and he, having reaped so plentifully of their spiritual things, thought it was but reasonable that they should reap of his carnal things, 1 Cor. ix. 11. What have we houses and tables for but as we have opportunity to serve God and his people with them?

(7.) The voice of rejoicing with that of salvation was heard in the jailer's house; never was such a truly merry night kept there before: *He rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house.* There was none in his house that refused to be baptized, and so made a jar in the harmony; but they were unanimous in embracing the gospel, which added much to the joy. Or it may be read, *He, believing in God, rejoiced all the house over*; *πᾶν οἶκον*—he went to every apartment, expressing his joy. Observe, [1.] His believing in Christ is called believing in God, which intimates that Christ is God, and that the design of the gospel is so far from being to draw us from God (saying, *Go serve other gods*, Deut. xiii. 2) that it has a direct tendency to bring us to God. [2.] His faith produced joy. Those that by faith have given up themselves to God in Christ as theirs have a great deal of reason to rejoice. The eunuch, when he was converted, *went on his way rejoicing*; and here the jailer rejoiced. The conversion of the nations is spoken of in the Old Testament as their rejoicing, Ps. lxxvii. 4; xcvi. 11. For, *believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* Believing in Christ is rejoicing in Christ. [3.] He signified his joy to all about him. Out of the abundance of the joy in his heart, his mouth spoke to the glory of God, and their encouragement who believed in God too. Those who have themselves tasted the comforts of religion should do what they can to bring others to the taste of them. One cheerful Christian should make many.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. 36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying

to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. 37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. 38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. 39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. 40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

In these verses we have,

I. Orders sent for the discharge of Paul and Silas out of prison v. 35, 36. 1. The magistrates that had so basely abused them the day before gave the orders; and their doing it so early, *as soon as it was day*, intimates that either they were sensible the terrific earthquake they felt at midnight was intended to plead the cause of their prisoners, or their consciences had smitten them for what they had done and made them very uneasy. While the persecuted were singing in the stocks, the persecutors were full of tossings to and fro upon their beds, through anguish of mind, complaining more of the lashes of their consciences than the prisoners did of the lashes on their backs, and more in haste to give them a discharge than they were to petition for one. Now God caused his servants to be pitied of those that had carried them captives, Ps. cvi. 46. The magistrates sent *serjeants*, *παῖδοὺς*—those that had the rods, the vergers, the tipstaves, the beadles, those that had been employed in beating them, that they might go and ask them forgiveness. The order was, *Let those men go*. It is probable that they designed further mischief to them, but God turned their hearts, and, as he had made their wrath hitherto to praise him, so the remainder thereof he did restrain, Ps. lxxvi. 10. 2. The jailer brought them the news (v. 36): *The magistrates have sent to let you go.* Some think the jailer had betimes transmitted an account to the magistrates of what had passed in his house that night, and so had obtained this order for the discharge of his prisoners: *Now therefore depart.* Not that he was desirous to part with them as his guests, but as his prisoners; they shall still be welcome to his house, but he is glad they are at liberty from his stocks. God could by his grace as easily have converted the magistrates as the jailer, and have brought



them to faith and baptism; but God hath chosen the poor of this world, James ii. 5.

II. Paul's insisting upon the breach of privilege which the magistrates had been guilty of, v. 37. Paul said to the sergeants, "*They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison against all law and justice, and now do they thrust us out privily, and think to make us amends with this for the injury done us? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out, and own that they have done us wrong.*" It is probable that the magistrates had some intimation that they were Romans, and were made sensible that their fury had carried them further than the law would bear them out; and that this was the reason why they gave orders for their discharge. Now observe,

1. Paul did not plead this before he was beaten, though it is probable that it might have prevented it, lest he should seem to be afraid of suffering for the truth which he had preached. Tully, in one of his orations, against Verres, tells of one Ganius, who was ordered by Verres to be beaten in Sicily, that all the while he was under the lash he cried out nothing but *Civis Romanus sum—I am a citizen of Rome*; Paul did not do so; he had nobler things than this to comfort himself with in his affliction.

2. He did plead it afterwards, to put an honour upon his sufferings and upon the cause he suffered for, to let the world know that the preachers of the gospel were not such despicable men as they were commonly looked upon to be, and that they merited better treatment. He did it likewise to mollify the magistrates towards the Christians at Philippi, and to gain better treatment for them, and to beget in the people a better opinion of the Christian religion, when they saw that Paul had a fair advantage against their magistrates, might have brought his action against them and had them called to an account for what they had done, and yet did not take the advantage, which was very much to the honour of that worthy name by which he was called. Now here,

(1.) Paul lets them know how many ways they had run themselves into a preminure, and that he had law enough to know it. [1.] They had *beaten* those that were Romans; some think that Silas was a Roman citizen as well as Paul; others that this does not necessarily follow. Paul was a citizen, and Silas was his companion. Now both the *lex Porcia* and the *lex Sempronia* did expressly forbid *liberum corpus Romani civis, virgis aut aliis verberibus cædi—the free body of a Roman citizen to be beaten with rods or otherwise*. Roman historians give instances of cities that had their charters taken from them for indignities done to Roman citizens; we shall afterwards find Paul making use of this plea, *ch. xxii. 25, 26*. To tell them they had *beaten* those who were the messengers of

Christ and the favourites of Heaven would have had no influence upon them; but to tell them they have abused Roman citizens will put them into a fright: so common is it for people to be more afraid of Cæsar's wrath than of Christ's. He that affronts a Roman, a gentleman, a nobleman, though ignorantly, and through mistake, thinks himself concerned to cry *Peccavi—I have done wrong*, and make his submission; but he that persecutes a Christian because he belongs to Christ stands to it, and thinks he may do it securely, though God hath said, *He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of my eye*, and Christ has warned us of the danger of *offending his little ones*. [2.] They had *beaten them uncondemned; indicta causa—without a fair hearing*, had not calmly examined what was said against them, much less enquired what they had to say for themselves. It is a universal rule of justice, *Causâ cognitâ possunt multi absolvi, incognitâ nemo condemnari potest—Many may be acquitted in consequence of having had a hearing, while without a hearing no one can be condemned*. Christ's servants would not have been abused as they have been if they and their cause might but have had an impartial trial. [3.] It was an aggravation of this that they had done it openly, which, as it was so much the greater disgrace to the sufferers, so it was the bolder defiance to justice and the law. [4.] They had *cast them into prison*, without showing any cause of their commitment, and in an arbitrary manner, by a verbal order. [5.] They now *thrust them out privily*; they had not indeed the impudence to stand by what they had done, but yet had not the honesty to own themselves in a fault.

(2.) He insists upon it that they should make them an acknowledgment of their error, and give them a public discharge, to make it the more honourable, as they had done them a public disgrace, which made that the more disgraceful: "*Let them come themselves, and fetch us out*, and give a testimony to our innocency, and that we have done nothing worthy of stripes or of bonds." It was not a point of honour that Paul stood thus siffly upon, but a point of justice, and not to himself so much as to his cause: "*Let them come and stop the clamours of the people, by confessing that we are not the troublers of the city.*"

III. The magistrates' submission, and the reversing of the judgment given against Paul and Silas, v. 38, 39. 1. The magistrates were frightened when they were told (though it may be they knew it before) that Paul was a Roman. They feared when they heard it, lest some of his friends should inform the government of what they had done, and they should fare the worse for it. The proceedings of persecutors have often been illegal, even by the law of nations, and often inhuman, against the law of nature, but always sinful, and against God's law. 2. They *came*

and besought them not to take advantage of the law against them, but to overlook the illegality of what they had done and say no more of it: they brought them out of the prison, owning that they were wrongfully put into it, and desired them that they would peaceably and quietly depart out of the city. Thus Pharaoh and his servants, who had set God and Moses at defiance, came to Moses, and bowed down themselves to him, saying, *Get thee out*, Exod. xi. 8. God can make the enemies of his people ashamed of their envy and enmity to them, Isa. xxvi. 11. Jerusalem is sometimes made a burdensome stone to those that heave at it, which they would gladly get clear of, Zech. xii. 3. Yet, if the repentance of these magistrates had been sincere, they would not have desired them to depart out of their city (as the Gadarenes desired to be rid of Christ), but would have courted their stay, and begged of them to continue in their city, to show them the way of salvation. But many are convinced that Christianity is not to be persecuted who yet are not convinced that it ought to be embraced, or at least are not persuaded to embrace it. They are compelled to do honour to Christ and his servants, *to worship before their feet, and to know that he has loved them* (Rev. iii. 9), and yet do not go so far as to have benefit by Christ, or to come in for a share in his love.

IV. The departure of Paul and Silas from Philippi, v. 40. They went out of the prison when they were legally discharged, and not till then, though they were illegally committed, and then, 1. They took leave of their friends: they went to the house of Lydia, where probably the disciples had met to pray for them, and there they saw the brethren, or visited them at their respective habitations (which was soon done, they were so few); and they comforted them, by telling them (saith an ancient Greek commentary) what God had done for them, and how he had owned them in the prison. They encouraged them to keep close to Christ, and hold fast the profession of their faith, whatever difficulties they might meet with, assuring them that all would then end well, everlastingly well. Young converts should have a great deal said to them to comfort them, for the joy of the Lord will be very much their strength. 2. They quitted the town: They departed. I wonder they should do so; for, now that they had had such an honourable discharge from their imprisonment, surely they might have gone on at least for some time in their work without danger; but I suppose they went away upon that principle of their Master's (Mark i. 38). *Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth.* Paul and Silas had an extraordinary call to Philippi; and yet, when they have come thither, they see little of the fruit of their labours, and are soon driven thence. Yet they did not come in vain. Though the begin-

nings here were small, the latter end greatly increased; now they laid the foundation of a church at Philippi, which became very eminent, had its bishops and deacons, and people that were more generous to Paul than any other church, as appears by his epistle to the Philippians, ch. i. 1; iv. 25. Let not ministers be discouraged, though they see not the fruit of their labours presently; the seed sown seems to be lost under the clods, but it shall come up again in a plentiful harvest in due time.

## CHAP. XVII.

We have here a further account of the travels of Paul, and his services and sufferings for Christ. He was not like a candle upon a table, that gives light only to one room, but like the sun that goes its circuit to give light to many. He was called into Macedonia, a large kingdom, ch. xvi. 9. He began with Philippi, because it was the first city he came to; but he must not confine himself to this. We have him here, 1. Preaching and persecuted at Thessalonica, another city of Macedonia, ver. 1-9. 11. Preaching at Berea, where he met with an encouraging auditory, but was driven thence also by persecution, ver. 10-15. 111. Disputing at Athens, the famous university of Greece (ver. 16-21), and the account he gave of natural religion, for the conviction of those that were addicted to polytheism and idolatry, and to lead them to the Christian religion (ver. 22-31), together with the success of this sermon, ver. 32-34.

NOW when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews; 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. 8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.



Paul's two epistles to the Thessalonians, the first two he wrote by inspiration, give such a shining character of that church, that we cannot but be glad here in the history to meet with an account of the first founding of the church there.

I. Here is Paul's coming to Thessalonica, which was the chief city of this country, called at this day *Salonech*, in the Turkish dominions. Observe, 1. Paul went on with his work, notwithstanding the ill usage he had met with at Philippi; he did not fail, nor was discouraged. He takes notice of this in his first epistle to the church here (1 Thess. ii. 2): *After we were shamefully treated at Philippi, yet we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God.* The opposition and persecution that he met with made him the more resolute. None of these things moved him; he could never have held out, and held on, as he did, if he had not been animated by a spirit of power from on high. 2. He did but *pass through Amphipolis and Apollonia*, the former a city near Philippi, the latter near Thessalonica; doubtless he was under divine direction, and was told by the Spirit (who, as the wind, bloweth where he listeth) what places he should pass through, and what he should rest in. Apollonia was a city of Illyricum, which, some think, illustrates that of Paul, that he had preached the gospel from *Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum* (Rom. xv. 19), that is, to the borders of Illyricum where he now was; and we may suppose though he is said only to *pass through* these cities, yet that he staid so long in them as to publish the gospel there, and to prepare the way for the entrance of other ministers among them, whom he would afterwards send.

II. His preaching to the Jews first, in their synagogue at Thessalonica. He found a synagogue of the Jews there (v. 1), which intimates that one reason why he passed through those other cities mentioned, and did not continue long in them, was because there were no synagogues in them. But, finding one in Thessalonica, by it he made his entry. 1. It was always his manner to begin with the Jews, to make them the first offer of the gospel, and not to turn to the Gentiles till they had refused it, that their mouths might be stopped from clamouring against him because he preached to the Gentiles; for if they received the gospel they would cheerfully embrace the new converts; if they refused it, they might thank themselves if the apostles carried it to those that would bid it welcome. That command of beginning at Jerusalem was justly construed as a direction, wherever they came, to begin with the Jews. 2. He met them in their synagogue on the sabbath day, in their place and at their time of meeting, and thus he would pay respect to both. Sabbaths and solemn assemblies are always very precious to those to whom Christ is precious, Ps. lxxxiv. 10. It

is good being in the house of the Lord on his day. This was Christ's manner, and Paul's manner, and has been the manner of all the saints, the *good old way* which they have walked in. 3. He *reasoned with them out of the scriptures*. They agreed with him to receive the scriptures of the Old Testament: so far they were of a mind. But they received the scripture, and therefore thought they had reason to reject Christ; Paul received the scripture, and therefore saw great reason to embrace Christ. It was therefore requisite, in order to their conviction, that he should, by reasoning with them, the Spirit setting in with him, convince them that his inferences from the scripture were right and theirs were wrong. Note, The preaching of the gospel should be both scriptural preaching and rational; such Paul's was, for he *reasoned out of the scriptures*: we must take the scriptures for our foundation, our oracle, and touchstone, and then reason out of them and upon them, and against those who, though they pretend zeal for the scriptures, as the Jews did, yet wrest them to their own destruction. Reason must not be set up in competition with the scripture, but it must be made use of in explaining and applying the scripture. 4. He continued to do this *three sabbath days* successively. If he could not convince them the first sabbath, he would try the second and the third; for *precept must be upon precept, and line upon line*. God waits for sinners' conversion, and so must his ministers; all the labourers come not into the vineyard at the first hour, nor at the first call, nor are wrought upon so suddenly as the jailer. 5. The drift and scope of his preaching and arguing was to prove that *Jesus is the Christ*; this was that which he opened and alleged, v. 3. He first explained his thesis, and opened the terms, and then alleged it, and laid it down, as that which he would abide by, and which he summoned them in God's name to subscribe to. Paul had an admirable method of discourse; and showed he was himself both well apprized of the doctrine he preached and thoroughly understood it, and that he was fully assured of the truth of it, and therefore he opened it like one that knew it, and alleged it like one that believed it. He showed them, (1.) That it was necessary the Messiah should *suffer, and die, and rise again*, that the Old-Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah made it necessary he should. The great objection which the Jews made against Jesus being the Messiah was his ignominious death and sufferings. The *cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block*, because it did by no means agree with the idea they had framed of the Messiah; but Paul here alleges and makes it out undeniably, not only that it was possible he might be the Messiah, though he suffered, but that, being the Messiah, it was necessary he should suffer. He could not be made perfect but by sufferings; for, if he had



not died, he could not have risen again from the dead. This was what Christ himself insisted upon (Luke xxiv. 26): *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* And again (v. 46): *Thus it is written, and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead.* He must needs have suffered for us, because he could not otherwise purchase redemption for us; and he must needs have risen again because he could not otherwise apply the redemption to us. (2.) That Jesus is the Messiah: "*This Jesus whom I preach unto you, and call upon you to believe in, is Christ, is the Christ, is the anointed of the Lord, is he that should come, and you are to look for no other; for God has both by his word and by his works (the two ways of his speaking to the children of men), by the scriptures and by miracles, and the gift of the Spirit to make both effectual, borne witness to him.*" Note, [1.] Gospel ministers should preach Jesus; he must be their principal subject; their business is to bring people acquainted with him. [2.] That which we are to preach concerning Jesus is that he is Christ; and therefore we may hope to be saved by him and are bound to be ruled by him.

III. The success of his preaching there, v. 4. 1. Some of the Jews believed, notwithstanding their rooted prejudices against Christ and his gospel, and they consorted with Paul and Silas: they not only associated with them as friends and companions, but they gave up themselves to their direction, as their spiritual guides; they put themselves into their possession as an inheritance into the possession of the right owner, so the word signifies; they first *gave themselves to the Lord*, and then to them *by the will of God*, 2 Cor. viii. 5. They adhered to Paul and Silas, and attended them wherever they went. Note, Those that believe in Jesus Christ come into communion with his faithful ministers, and associate with them. 2. Many more of the devout Greeks, and of the chief women, embraced the gospel. These were proselytes of the gate, the *godly among the Gentiles* (so the Jews called them), such as, though they did not submit to the law of Moses, yet renounced idolatry and immorality, worshipped the true God only, and did no man any wrong. These were *οἱ εὐσεβεῖς* "Ελληνες—the worshipping Gentiles; as in America they call those of the natives that are converted to the faith of Christ the *praying Indians*. These were admitted to join with the Jews in their synagogue-worship. Of these a great multitude believed, more of them than of the thorough-paced Jews, who were wedded to the ceremonial law. And not a few of the chief women of the city, that were devout and had a sense of religion, embraced Christianity. Particular notice is taken of this, for an example to the ladies, the chief women, and an encouragement to them to employ themselves

in the exercises of devotion and to submit themselves to the commanding power of Christ's holy religion, in all the instances of it; for this intimates how acceptable it will be to God, what an honour to Christ, and what great influence it may have upon many, besides the advantages of it to their own souls. No mention is here made of their preaching the gospel to the Gentile idolaters at Thessalonica, and yet it is certain that they did, and that great numbers were converted; nay, it should seem that of the Gentile converts that church was chiefly composed, though notice is not taken of them here; for Paul writes to the Christians there as having *turned to God from idols* (1 Thess. i. 9), and that at the first entering in of the apostles among them.

IV. The trouble that was given to Paul and Silas at Thessalonica. Wherever they preached, they were sure to be persecuted; bonds and afflictions awaited them in every city. Observe,

1. Who were the authors of their trouble: the *Jews who believed not, who were moved with envy*, v. 5. The Jews were in all places the most inveterate enemies to the Christians, especially to those Jews that turned Christians, against whom they had a particular spleen, as deserters. Now see what that division was which Christ came to send upon earth; some of the Jews believed the gospel and pitied and prayed for those that did not; while those that did not envied and hated those that did. St. Paul in his epistle to this church takes notice of the rage and enmity of the Jews against the preachers of the gospel, as their measure-filling sin. 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

2. Who were the instruments of the trouble: the Jews made use of *certain lewd persons of the baser sort*, whom they picked up and got together, and who must undertake to give the sense of the city against the apostles. All wise and sober people looked upon them with respect, and valued them, and none would appear against them but such as were the scum of the city, a company of vile men, that were given to all manner of wickedness. Tertullian pleads this with those that opposed Christianity, that the enemies of it were generally the worst of men: *Tales semper nobis insecutores, injusti, impii, turpes, quos, et ipsi damnare consuevit*—Our persecutors are invariably unjust, impious, infamous, whom you yourselves have been accustomed to condemn.—Apologia, cap. 5. It is the honour of religion that those who hate it are generally the *lewd fellows of the baser sort*, that are lost to all sense of justice and virtue.

3. In what method they proceeded against them. (1.) They *set the city in an uproar*, made a noise to put people in a fright, and then every body ran to see what the matter was; they began a riot, and then the mob was up presently. See who are the trouble-  
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of Israel—not the faithful preachers of the gospel, but the enemies of it. See how the devil carries on his designs; he sets cities in an uproar, sets souls in an uproar, and then fishes in troubled waters. (2.) They assaulted the house of Jason, where the apostles lodged, with a design to bring them out to the people, whom they had incensed and enraged against them, and by whom they hoped to see them pulled to pieces. The proceedings here were altogether illegal; if Jason's house must be searched, it ought to be done by the proper officers, and not without a warrant: "A man's house," the law says, "is his castle," and for them in a tumultuous manner to assault a man's house, to put him and his family in fear, was but to show to what outrages men are carried by a spirit of persecution. If men have offended, magistrates are appointed to enquire into the offence, and to judge of it; but to make the rabble judges and executioners too (as these Jews designed to do) was to make truth fall in the street, to set servants on horseback, and leave princes to walk as servants on the earth—to depose equity, and enthroned fury. (3.) When they could not get the apostles into their hands (whom they would have punished as vagabonds, and incensed the people against as strangers that came to spy out the land, and devour its strength, and eat the bread out of their mouths), then they fall upon an honest citizen of their own, who entertained the apostles in his house, his name Jason, a converted Jew, and drew him out with some others of the brethren to the rulers of the city. The apostles were advised to withdraw, for they were more obnoxious, *Currenti cede furori—Retire before the torrent*. But their friends were willing to expose themselves, being better able to weather this storm. For a good man, for such good men as the apostles were, some would even dare to die. (4.) They accused them to the rulers, and represented them as dangerous persons, not fit to be tolerated; the crime charged upon Jason is receiving and harbouring the apostles (v. 7), countenancing them and promoting their interest. And what was the apostles' crime, that it should be no less than misprision of treason to give them lodging? Two very black characters are here given them, enough to make them odious to the people and obnoxious to the magistrates, if they had been just:—[1.] That they were enemies to the public peace, and threw every thing into disorder wherever they came: *Those that have turned the world upside down are come hither also*. In one sense it is true that wherever the gospel comes in its power to any place, to any soul, it works such a change there, gives such a wide change to the stream, so directly contrary to what it was, that it may be said to turn the world upside down in that place, in that soul. The love of the world is rooted out of the heart, and the way of the world contradicted in the life; so that the world is

turned upside down there. But in the sense in which they meant it it is utterly false: they would have it thought that the preachers of the gospel were incendiaries and mischief makers wherever they came, that they sowed discord among relations, set neighbours together by the ears, obstructed commerce, and inverted all order and regularity. Because they persuaded people to turn from vice to virtue, from idols to the living and true God, from malice and envy to love and peace, they are charged with turning the world upside down, when it was only the kingdom of the devil in the world that they thus overturned. Their enemies set the city in an uproar, and then laid the blame upon them; as Nero set Rome on fire, and then charged it upon the Christians. If Christ's faithful ministers, even those that are most quiet in the land, be thus invidiously misrepresented and mis-called, let them not think it strange nor be exasperated by it; we are not better than Paul and Silas, who were thus abused. The accusers cry out, "They are come hither also; they have been doing all the mischief they could in other places, and now they have brought the infection hither; it is therefore time for us to bestir ourselves, and make head against them." [2.] That they were enemies to the established government, and disaffected to that, and their principles and practices were destructive to monarchy and inconsistent with the constitution of the state (v. 7): They all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar; not to any particular decree, for there was as yet no law of the empire against Christianity, but contrary to Cæsar's power in general to make decrees; for they say, *There is another king, one Jesus*, not only a king of the Jews, as our Saviour was himself charged before Pilate, but *Lord of all*; so Peter called him in the first sermon he preached to the Gentiles, ch. x. 36. It is true the Roman government, both while it was a commonwealth and after it came into the Cæsars' hands, was very jealous of any governor under their dominion taking upon him the title of king, and there was an express law against it. But Christ's kingdom was not of this world. His followers said indeed, Jesus is a king, but not an earthly king, not a rival with Cæsar, nor his ordinances interfering with the decrees of Cæsar, but who had made it a law of his kingdom to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. There was nothing in the doctrine of Christ that tended to the dethroning of princes, nor the depriving them of any of their prerogatives. The Jews knew this very well, and it was against their consciences that they brought such a charge against the apostles; and of all people it ill became the Jews to do it, who hated Cæsar and his government, and sought the ruin of him and it, and who expected a Messiah that should be a temporal prince, and overturn the thrones of kingdoms, and were therefore opposing our Lord Jesus be-

cause he did not appear under that character. Thus those have been most spiteful in representing God's faithful people as enemies to Cæsar, and hurtful to kings and provinces, who have been themselves setting up *imperium in imperio*—a kingdom within a kingdom, a power not only in competition with Cæsar's but superior to it, that of the papal supremacy.

4. The great uneasiness which this gave to the city (v. 8): *They troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.* They had no ill opinion of the apostles or their doctrine, could not apprehend any danger to the state from them, and therefore were willing to connive at them; but, if they be represented to them by the prosecutors as enemies to Cæsar, they will be obliged to take cognizance of them, and to suppress them, for fear of the government, and this troubled them. Claudius, who then held the reins of government, is represented by Suetonius as a man very jealous of the least commotion and timorous to the last degree, which obliged the rulers under him to be watchful against every thing that looked dangerous, or gave the least cause of suspicion; and therefore it troubled them to be brought under a necessity of disturbing good men.

5. The issue of this troublesome affair. The magistrates had no mind to prosecute the Christians. Care was taken to secure the apostles; they absconded, and fled, and kept out of their hands; so that nothing was to be done but to discharge Jason and his friends upon bail, v. 9. The magistrates here were not so easily incensed against the apostles as the magistrates at Philippi were, but were more considerate and of better temper; so they took security of Jason and the other, bound them to their good behaviour; and perhaps they gave bond for Paul and Silas, that they should be forthcoming when they were called for, if any thing should afterwards appear against them. Among the persecutors of Christianity, as there have been instances of the madness and rage of brutes, so there have been likewise of the prudence and temper of men; moderation has been a virtue.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. 13 But when the Jews of Thessa-

lonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. 14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. 15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

In these verses we have,

I. Paul and Silas removing to Berea, and employed in preaching the gospel there, v. 10. They had proceeded so far at Thessalonica that the foundations of a church were laid, and others were raised up to carry on the work that was begun, against whom the rulers and people were not so much prejudiced as they were against Paul and Silas; and therefore when the storm rose they withdrew, taking this as an indication to them that they must quit that place for the present. That command of Christ to his disciples, *When they persecute you in one city flee to another*, intends their flight to be not so much for their own safety ("flee to another, to hide there") as for the carrying on of their work ("flee to another, to preach there"), as appears by the reason given—*You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man come*, Matt. x. 23. Thus out of the eater came forth meat, and the devil was out-shot in his own bow; he thought by persecuting the apostles to stop the progress of the gospel, but it was so overruled as to be made to further it. See here, 1. The care that the brethren took of Paul and Silas, when they perceived how the plot was laid against them: *They immediately sent them away by night*, incognito, to Berea. This could be no surprise to the young converts; *For when we were with you* (saith Paul to them, 1 Thess. iii. 4), *when we came first among you, we told you that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and you know.* It should seem that Paul and Silas would willingly have staid, and faced the storm, if the brethren would have let them; but they would rather be deprived of the apostles' help than expose their lives, which, it should seem, were dearer to their friends than to themselves. *They sent them away by night*, under the covert of that, as if they had been evil doers. 2. The constancy of Paul and Silas in their work. Though they fled from Thessalonica, they did not flee from the service of Christ. *When they came to Berea, they went into the synagogue of the Jews*, and made their public appearance there. Though the Jews at Thessalonica had been their spiteful enemies, and, for aught they knew, the Jews at Berea would be so too, yet they did not therefore decline



paying their respect to the Jews, either in revenge for the injuries they had received or for fear of what they might receive. If others will not do their duty to us, yet we ought to do ours to them.

II. The good character of the Jews in Berea (v. 11): *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica*. The Jews in the synagogue at Berea were better disposed to receive the gospel than the Jews in the synagogue at Thessalonica; they were not so bigoted and prejudiced against it, not so peevish and ill-natured; they were more noble, *εὐγενέστεροι*—better bred.

1. They had a freer thought, and lay more open to conviction, were willing to hear reason, and admit the force of it, and to subscribe to that which appeared to them to be truth, though it was contrary to their former sentiments. This was more noble.

2. They had a better temper, were not so sour, and morose, and ill-conditioned towards all that were not of their mind. As they were ready to come into a unity with those that by the power of truth they were brought to concur with, so they continued in charity with those that they saw cause to differ from. This was more noble. They neither prejudged the cause, nor were moved with envy at the managers of it, as the Jews at Thessalonica were, but very generously gave both it and them a fair hearing, without passion or partiality; for, (1.) *They received the word with all readiness of mind*; they were very willing to hear it, presently apprehended the meaning of it, and did not shut their eyes against the light. *They attended to the things that were spoken by Paul*, as Lydia did, and were very well pleased to hear them. They did not pick quarrels with the word, nor find fault, nor seek occasion against the preachers of it; but bade it welcome, and put a candid construction upon every thing that was said. Herein *they were more noble than the Jews in Thessalonica*, but walked in the same spirit, and in the same steps, with the Gentiles there, of whom it is said *that they received the word with joy of the Holy Ghost, and turned to God from idols*, 1 Thess. i. 6—9. This was true nobility. The Jews gloried much in their being Abraham's seed, thought themselves well-born and that they could not be better born. But they are here told who among them were the most noble and the best-bred men—those that were most disposed to receive the gospel, and had the high and conceited thoughts in them subdued, and brought into obedience to Christ. These were the most noble, and, if I may so say, the most gentleman-like men. *Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus*—*Virtue and piety are true nobility*, true honour; and, without these, *Stemmata quid prosunt?*—*What are pedigrees and pompous titles worth?* (2.) *They searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so*. Their readiness of mind to receive the word was not such as

that they took things upon trust, swallowed them upon an implicit faith: no; but since Paul reasoned out of the scriptures, and referred them to the Old Testament for the proof of what he said, they had recourse to their Bibles, turned to the places to which he referred them, read the context, considered the scope and drift of them, compared them with other places of scripture, examined whether Paul's inferences from them were natural and genuine and his arguments upon them cogent, and determined accordingly. Observe, [1.] The doctrine of Christ does not fear a scrutiny. We that are advocates for his cause desire no more than that people will not say, *These things are not so*, till they have first, without prejudice and partiality, examined whether they be so or no. [2.] The New Testament is to be examined by the Old. The Jews received the Old Testament, and those that did so, if they considered things aright, could not but see cause sufficient to receive the New, because in it they see all the prophecies and promises of the Old fully and exactly accomplished. [3.] Those that read and receive the scriptures must search them (John v. 39), must study them, and take pains in considering them, both that they may find out the truth contained in them, and may not mistake the sense of them and so run into error, or remain in it; and that they may find out the whole truth contained in them, and may not rest in a superficial knowledge, in the outward court of the scriptures, but may have an intimate acquaintance with the mind of God revealed in them. [4.] Searching the scriptures must be our daily work. Those that heard the word in the synagogue on the sabbath day did not think this enough, but were searching it every day in the week, that they might improve what they had heard the sabbath before, and prepare for what they were to hear the sabbath after. [5.] Those are truly noble, and are in a fair way to be more and more so, that make the scriptures their oracle and touchstone, and consult them accordingly. Those that rightly study the scriptures, and meditate therein day and night, have their minds filled with noble thoughts, fixed to noble principles, and formed for noble aims and designs. *These are more noble*.

III. The good effect of the preaching of the gospel at Berea: it had the desired success; the people's hearts being prepared, a great deal of work was done suddenly, v. 12. 1. Of the Jews there were many that believed. At Thessalonica there were only some of them that believed (v. 4), but at Berea, where they heard with unprejudiced minds, many believed, many more Jews than at Thessalonica. Note, God gives grace to those whom he first inclines to make a diligent use of the means of grace, and particularly to search the scriptures. 2. Of the Greeks likewise, the Gentiles, many believed, both of the honourable women,



the ladies of quality, and of men not a few, men of the first rank, as should seem by their being mentioned with the honourable women. The wives first embraced the gospel, and then they persuaded their husbands to embrace it. *For what knowest thou, O wife, but thou shalt save thy husband?* 1 Cor. vii. 16.

IV. The persecution that was raised against Paul and Silas at Berea, which forced Paul thence. 1. *The Jews at Thessalonica* were the mischief-makers at Berea. They had notice that the word of God was preached at Berea (for envy and jealousy bring quick intelligence), and likewise that the Jews there were not so inveterately set against it as they were. They came thither also, to turn the world upside down there, and they stirred up the people, and incensed them against the preachers of the gospel; as if they had such a commission from the prince of darkness to go from place to place to oppose the gospel as the apostles had to go from place to place to preach it. Thus we read before that the Jews of Antioch and Iconium came to Lystra on purpose to incense the people against the apostles, *ch. xiv. 19*. See how restless Satan's agents are in their opposition to the gospel of Christ and the salvation of the souls of men. This is an instance of the enmity that is in the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman; and we must not think it strange if persecutors at home extend their rage to stir up persecution abroad. 2. This occasioned Paul's removal to Athens. By seeking to extinguish this divine fire which Christ had already kindled, they did but spread it the further and the faster; so long Paul staid at Berea, and such success he had there, that there were brethren there, and sensible active men too, which appeared by the care they took of Paul, *v. 14*. They were aware of the coming of the persecuting Jews from Thessalonica, and that they were busy in irritating the people against Paul; and, fearing what it would come to, they lost no time, but immediately sent Paul away, against whom they were most prejudiced and enraged, hoping that this would pacify them, while they retained Silas and Timothy there still, who, now that Paul had broken the ice, might be sufficient to carry on the work without exposing him. They sent Paul to go even to the sea, so some; to go as it were to the sea, so we read it; *ὡς ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν*. He went out from Berea, in that road which went to the sea, that the Jews, if they enquired after him, might think he had gone to a great distance; but he went by land to Athens, in which there was no culpable dissimulation at all. Those that conducted Paul (as his guides and guards, he being both a stranger in the country and one that had many enemies) brought him to Athens. The Spirit of God, influencing his spirit, directed him to that famous city,—famous of old for its power and dominion, when the Athenian

commonwealth coped with the Spartan,—famous afterwards for learning; it was the rendezvous of scholars. Those who wanted learning went thither to get it, because those that had learning went thither to show it. It was a great university, much resorted to from all parts, and therefore, for the better diffusing of gospel light, Paul is sent thither, and is not ashamed nor afraid to show his face among the philosophers there, and there to preach Christ crucified, though he knew it would be as much foolishness to the Greeks as it was to the Jews a stumbling-block. 3. He ordered Silas and Timothy to come to him to Athens, when he found there was a prospect of doing good there; or because, there being none there that he knew, he was solitary and melancholy without them. Yet it should seem that, great as was the haste he was in for them, he ordered Timothy to go about by Thessalonica, to bring him an account of the affairs of that church; for he says (1 Thess. iii. 1, 2), *We thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timotheus to establish you*.

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. 17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. 18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. 19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? 20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. 21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

A scholar that nas acquaintance, and is in love, with the learning of the ancients, would think he should be very happy if he were where Paul now was, at Athens, in the midst of the various sects of philosophers, and would have a great many curious questions to ask them, for the explication of the remains we have of the Athenian learning; but Paul, though bred a scholar, and an ingenious active man, does not make this any of his



business at Athens. He has other work to mind: it is not the improving of himself in their philosophy that he aims at, he has learned to call it a vain thing, and is above it (Col. ii. 8); his business is, in God's name, to correct their disorders in religion, and to turn them from the service of idols, and of Satan in them, to the service of the true and living God in Christ.

I. Here is the impression which the abominable ignorance and superstition of the Athenians made upon Paul's spirit, v. 16. Observe, 1. The account here given of that city: it was wholly given to idolatry. This agrees with the account which the heathen writers give of it, that there were more idols in Athens than there were in all Greece besides put together, and that they had twice as many sacred feasts as others had. Whatever strange gods were recommended to them, they admitted them, and allowed them a temple and an altar, so that they had almost as many gods as men—*facilius possis deum quam hominem invenire*. And this city, after the empire became Christian, continued incurably addicted to idolatry, and all the pious edicts of the Christian emperors could not root it out, till, by the irruption of the Goths, that city was in so particular a manner laid waste that there are now scarcely any remains of it. It is observable that there, where human learning most flourished, idolatry most abounded, and the most absurd and ridiculous idolatry, which confirms that of the apostle, that when they professed themselves to be wise they became fools (Rom. i. 22), and, in the business of religion, were of all other the most vain in their imaginations. The world by wisdom knew not God, 1 Cor. i. 21. They might have reasoned against polytheism and idolatry; but, it seems, the greatest pretenders to reason were the greatest slaves to idols: so necessary was it to the re-establishing even of natural religion that there should be a divine revelation, and that centering in Christ. 2. The disturbance which the sight of this gave to Paul. Paul was not willing to appear publicly till Silas and Timothy came to him, that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses the word might be established; but in the mean time his spirit was stirred within him. He was filled with concern for the glory of God, which he saw given to idols, and with compassion to the souls of men, which he saw thus enslaved to Satan, and led captive by him at his will. He beheld these transgressors, and was grieved; and horror took hold of him. He had a holy indignation at the heathen priests, that led the people such an endless trace of idolatry, and at their philosophers, that knew better, and yet never said a word against it, but themselves went down the stream.

II. The testimony that he bore against their idolatry, and his endeavours to bring them to the knowledge of the truth. He did not, as Witsius observes, in the heat of his

zeal break into the temples, pull down their images, demolish their altars, or fly in the face of their priests; nor did he run about the streets crying, "You are all the bond-slaves of the devil," though it was too true; but he observed decorum, and kept himself within due bounds, doing that only which became a prudent man. 1. He went to the synagogue of the Jews, who, though enemies to Christianity, were free from idolatry, and joined with them in that among them which was good, and took the opportunity given him there of disputing for Christ, v. 17. He discoursed with the Jews, reasoned fairly with them, and put it to them what reason they could give why, since they expected the Messiah, they would not receive Jesus. There he met with the devout persons that had forsaken the idol temples, but rested in the Jews' synagogue, and he talked with these to lead them on to the Christian church, to which the Jews' synagogue was but as a porch. 2. He entered into conversation with all that came in his way about matters of religion: In the market—*ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ*, in the exchange, or place of commerce, he disputed daily, as he had occasion, with those that met with him, or that he happened to fall into company with, that were heathen, and never came to the Jews' synagogue. The zealous advocates for the cause of Christ will be ready to plead it in all companies, as occasion offers. The ministers of Christ must not think it enough to speak a good word for Christ once a week, but should be daily speaking honourably of him to such as meet with them.

III. The enquiries which some of the philosophers made concerning Paul's doctrine. Observe,

1. Who they were that encountered him, that entered into discourse with him, and opposed him: He disputed with all that met him, in the places of concourse, or rather of discourse. Most took no notice of him, slighted him, and never minded a word he said; but there were some of the philosophers that thought him worth making remarks upon, and they were those whose principles were most directly contrary to Christianity (1.) The Epicureans, who thought God altogether such a one as themselves, an idle inactive being, that minded nothing, nor put any difference between good and evil. They would not own, either that God made the world or that he governs it; nor that man needs to make any conscience of what he says or does, having no punishment to fear nor rewards to hope for, all which loose atheistical notions Christianity is levelled against. The Epicureans indulged themselves in all the pleasures of sense, and placed their happiness in them, in what Christ has taught us in the first place to deny ourselves. (2.) The Stoics, who thought themselves altogether as good as God, and indulged themselves as much in the pride of life as the Epicureans did in the lusts of the flesh and of the eye; they made

their virtuous man to be no way inferior to God himself, nay to be superior. *Esse aliquid quo sapiens antecedit Deum*—There is that in which a wise man excels God, so Seneca: to which Christianity is directly opposite, as it teaches us to deny ourselves and abase ourselves, and to come off from all confidence in ourselves, that Christ may be all in all.

2. What their different sentiments were of him; such there were as there were of Christ, v. 18. (1.) *Some called him a babbler*, and thought he spoke, without any design, whatever came uppermost, as men of crazed imaginations do: *What will this babbler say?* ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος—this scatterer of words, that goes about, throwing here one idle word or story and there another, without any intentment or signification; or, *this picker up of seeds*. Some of the critics tell us that the term is used for a little sort of bird, that is worth nothing at all, either for the spit or for the cage, *that picks up the seeds that lie uncovered, either in the field or by the way-side, and hops here and there for that purpose*—*Avicula parva quæ semina in triviis dispersa colligere solet*; such a pitiful contemptible animal they took Paul to be, or supposed he went from place to place venting his notions to get money, a penny here and another there, as that bird picks up here and there a grain. They looked upon him as an idle fellow, and regarded him, as we say, no more than a ballad-singer. (2.) *Others called him a setter forth of strange gods*, and thought he spoke with design to make himself considerable by that means. And, if he had strange gods to set forth, he could not bring them to a better market than to Athens. He did not, as many did, directly set forth new gods, nor avowedly; but they thought he seemed to do so, *because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection*. From his first coming among them he ever and anon harped upon these two strings, which are indeed the principal doctrines of Christianity—Christ and a future state—Christ our way, and heaven our end; and, though he did not call these gods, yet they thought he meant to make them so. Τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν, “Jesus they took for a new god, and anastasis, the resurrection, for a new goddess.” Thus they lost the benefit of the Christian doctrine by dressing it up in a pagan dialect, as if believing in Jesus, and looking for the resurrection, were the worshipping of new demons.

3. The proposal they made to give him a free, full, fair, and public hearing, v. 19, 20. They had heard some broken pieces of his doctrine, and are willing to have a more perfect knowledge of it. (1.) They look upon it as strange and surprising, and very different from the philosophy that had for many ages been taught and professed at Athens. “It is a new doctrine, which we do not understand the drift and design of. *Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears, which we never heard of before, and know not what to*

make of now.” By this it should seem that, among all the learned books they had, they either had not, or heeded not, the books of Moses and the prophets, else the doctrine of Christ would not have been so perfectly new and strange to them. There was but one book in the world that was of divine inspiration, and that was the only book they were strangers to, which, if they would have given a due regard to it, would, in its very first page, have determined that great controversy among them about the origin of the universe. (2.) They desired to know more of it, only because it was new and strange: “*May we know what this new doctrine is?* Or, is it (like the mysteries of the gods) to be kept as a profound secret? If it may be, we would gladly know, and desire thee to tell us, *what these things mean*, that we may be able to pass a judgment upon them.” This was a fair proposal; it was fit they should know what this doctrine was before they embraced it; and they were so fair as not to condemn it till they had had some account of it. (3.) The place they brought him to, in order to this public declaration of his doctrine; it was to *Areopagus*, the same word that is translated (v. 22) *Mars’ Hill*; it was the town-house, or guildhall of their city, where the magistrates met upon public business, and the courts of justice were kept; and it was as the theatre in the university, or the schools, where learned men met to communicate their notions. The court of justice which sat here was famous for its equity, which drew appeals to it from all parts; if any denied a God, he was liable to the censure of this court. Diagoras was by them put to death, as a contemner of the gods; nor might any new God be admitted without their approbation. Hither they brought Paul to be tried, not as a criminal but as a candidate.

4. The general character of the people of that city given upon this occasion (v. 21): *All the Athenians*, that is natives of the place, and strangers who sojourned there for their improvement, *spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing*, which comes in as the reason why they were inquisitive concerning Paul’s doctrine, not because it was good, but because it was new. It is a very sorry character which is here given of these people, yet many transcribe it. (1.) They were all for conversation. St. Paul exhorts his pupil to *give attendance to reading and meditation* (1 Tim. iv. 13, 15), but these people despised those old-fashioned ways of getting knowledge, and preferred that of telling and hearing. It is true that good company is of great use to a man, and will polish one that has laid a good foundation in study; but that knowledge will be very flashy and superficial which is got by conversation only. (2.) They affected novelty; they were for *telling and hearing some new thing*. They were for new schemes and new notions in



philosophy, new forms and plans of government in politics, and, in religion, for new gods that came newly up (Deut. xxxii. 17), new demons, new-fashioned images and altars (2 Kings xvi. 10); they were given to change. Demosthenes, an orator of their own, had charged this upon them long before, in one of his Philippics, that their common question in the markets, or wherever they met, was *τί τί λέγεται νεωτερον*—*whether there was any news*. (3.) They meddled in other people's business, and were inquisitive concerning that, and never minded their own. Tattlers are always *busy bodies*, 1 Tim. v. 13. (4.) *They spent their time in nothing else*, and a very uncomfortable account those must needs have to make of their time who thus spend it. Time is precious, and we are concerned to be good husbands of it, because eternity depends upon it, and it is hastening apace into eternity, but abundance of it is wasted in unprofitable converse. To tell or hear the new occurrences of providence concerning the public in our own or other nations, and concerning our neighbours and friends, is of good use now and then; but to set up for news-mongers, and to spend our time in nothing else, is to lose that which is very precious for the gain of that which is worth little.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, *Ye men of Athens*, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 Forasmuch then as we are the

offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

We have here St. Paul's sermon at Athens. Divers sermons we have had, which the apostles preached to the Jews, or such Gentiles as had an acquaintance with and veneration for the Old Testament, and were worshippers of the true and living God; and all they had to do with them was to open and allege *that Jesus is the Christ*; but here we have a sermon to heathens, that worshipped false gods, and were without the true God in the world, and to them the scope of their discourse was quite different from what it was to the other. In the former case their business was to lead their hearers by prophecies and miracles to the knowledge of the Redeemer, and faith in him; in the latter it was to lead them by the common works of providence to the knowledge of the Creator, and the worship of him. One discourse of this kind we had before to the rude idolaters of Lystra that deified the apostles (*ch. xiv. 15*); this recorded here is to the more polite and refined idolaters at Athens, and an admirable discourse it is, and every way suited to his auditory and the design he had upon them.

1. He lays down this, as the scope of his discourse, that he aimed to bring them to the *knowledge of the only living and true God*, as the sole and proper object of their adoration. He is here obliged to lay the foundation, and to instruct them in the first principle of all religion, that there is a God, and that God is but one. When he preached against the gods they worshipped, he had no design to draw them to atheism, but to the service of the true Deity. Socrates, who had exposed the pagan idolatry, was indicted in this very court, and condemned, not only because he did not esteem those to be gods whom the city esteemed to be so, but because he introduced new demons; and this was the charge against Paul. Now he tacitly owns the former part of the charge, but guards against the latter, by declaring that he does not introduce any new gods, but reduce them to the *knowledge of one God, the Ancient of days*. Now,

1. He shows them that they needed to be instructed herein; for they had lost the knowledge of the true God that made them,

in the worship of false gods that they had made (*Deos qui rogat ille facit—He who worships the gods makes them*): I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. The crime he charges upon them is giving that glory to others which is due to God only, that they feared and worshipped demons, spirits that they supposed inhabited the images to which they directed their worship. "It is time for you to be told that there is but one God who are multiplying deities above any of your neighbours, and mingle your idolatries with all your affairs. You are in all things too superstitious—*δυσδαίμονιστέροι, you easily admit every thing that comes under a show of religion, but it is that which corrupts it more and more; I bring you that which will reform it.*" Their neighbours praised them for this as a pious people, but Paul condemns them for it. Yet it is observable how he mollifies the charge, does not aggravate it, to provoke them. He uses a word which among them was taken in a good sense: *You are every way more than ordinarily religious, so some read it; you are very devout in your way.* Or, if it be taken in a bad sense, it is mitigated: "You are as it were (*ὥς*) more superstitious than you need be;" and he says no more than what he himself perceived; *θεωρῶ—I see it, I observe it.* They charged Paul with setting forth new demons: "Nay," says he, "you have demons enough already; I will not add to the number of them."

2. He shows them that they themselves had given a fair occasion for the declaring of this one true God to them, by setting up an altar, *To the unknown God*, which intimated an acknowledgment that there was a God who was yet to them an unknown God; and it is sad to think that at Athens, a place which was supposed to have the monopoly of wisdom, the true God was an unknown God, the only God that was unknown. "Now you ought to bid Paul welcome, for this is the God whom he comes to make known to you, the God whom you tacitly complain that you are ignorant of." There, where we are sensible we are defective and come short, just there, the gospel takes us up, and carries us on.

(1.) Various conjectures the learned have concerning this altar dedicated to the unknown God. [1.] Some think the meaning is, *To the God whose honour it is to be unknown*, and that they intended the God of the Jews, whose name is ineffable, and whose nature is unsearchable. It is probable they had heard from the Jews, and from the writings of the Old Testament, of the God of Israel, who had proved himself to be above all gods, but was a God hiding himself, Isa. xlv. 15. The heathen called the Jews' God, *Deus incertus, incertum Mosis Numen—an uncertain God, the uncertain Deity of Moses*, and the God without name. Now this God, says Paul, this God, who cannot by searching be found out to

perfection, I now declare unto you. [2.] Others think the meaning is, *To the God whom it is our unhappiness not to know*, which intimates that they would think it their happiness to know him. Some tell us that upon occasion of a plague that raged at Athens, when they had sacrificed to all their gods one after another for the staying of the plague, they were advised to let some sheep go where they pleased, and, where they lay down, to build an altar, *τῷ προσήκοντι Θεῷ—to the proper God, or the God to whom that affair of staying the pestilence did belong*; and, because they knew not how to call him, they inscribed it, *To the unknown God*. Others, from some of the best historians of Athens, tell us they had many altars inscribed, *To the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa—To the unknown God*: and some of the neighbouring countries used to swear by the God that was unknown at Athens; so Lucian.

(2.) Observe, how modestly Paul mentions this. That he might not be thought a spy, nor one that had intruded himself more than became a stranger into the knowledge of their mysteries, he tells them that he observed it as he passed by, and saw their devotions, or their sacred things. It was public, and he could not forbear seeing it, and it was proper enough to make his remarks upon the religion of the place; and observe how prudently and ingeniously he takes occasion from this to bring in his discourse of the true God. [1.] He tells them that the God he preached to them was one that they did already worship, and therefore he was not a setter forth of new or strange gods: "As you have a dependence upon him, so he has had some kind of homage from you." [2.] He was one whom they ignorantly worshipped, which was a reproach to them, who were famous all the world over for their knowledge. "Now," says he, "I come to take away that reproach, that you may worship him understandingly whom now you worship ignorantly; and it cannot but be acceptable to have your blind devotion turned into a reasonable service, that you may not worship you know not what."

II. He confirms his doctrine of one living and true God, by his works of creation and providence: "The God whom I declare unto you to be the sole object of your devotion, and call you to the worship of, is the God that made the world and governs it; and, by the visible proofs of these, you may be led to this invisible Being, and be convinced of his eternal power and Godhead." The Gentiles in general, and the Athenians particularly, in their devotions were governed, not by their philosophers, many of whom spoke clearly and excellently well of one supreme Numen, of his infinite perfections and universal agency and dominion (witness the writings of Plato, and long after of Cicero); but by their poets, and their idle fictions. Homer's works were the Bible of the pagan theology, or demonology rather, not Plato's; and the phi-



Iosophers tamely submitted to this, rested in their speculations, disputed them among themselves, and taught them to their scholars, but never made the use they ought to have made of them in opposition to idolatry; so little certainty were they at concerning them, and so little impression did these things make upon them! Nay, they ran themselves into the superstition of their country, and thought they ought to do so. *Eamus ad communem errorem—Let us embrace the common error.* Now Paul here sets himself, in the first place, to reform the philosophy of the Athenians (he corrects the mistakes of that), and to give them right notions of *the one only living and true God*, and then to carry the matter further than they ever attempted for the reforming of their worship, and the bringing them off from their polytheism and idolatry. Observe what glorious things Paul here says of that God whom he served, and would have them to serve.

1. *He is the God that made the world, and all things therein; the Father almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.* This was admitted by many of the philosophers; but those of Aristotle's school denied it, and maintained "that the world was from eternity, and every thing always was what now it is." Those of the school of Epicurus fancied "that the world was made by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which, having been in perpetual motion, at length accidentally jumped into this frame." Against both these Paul here maintains that God by the operations of an infinite power, according to the contrivance of an infinite wisdom, in the beginning of time made the world and all things therein, the origin of which was owing, not as they fancied to an eternal matter, but to an eternal mind.

2. He is therefore *Lord of heaven and earth*, that is, he is the rightful owner, proprietor, and possessor, of all the beings, powers, and riches of the upper and lower world, material and immaterial, visible and invisible. This follows from his making heaven and earth. If he created all, without doubt he has the disposing of all: and, where he gives being, he has an indisputable right to give law.

3. He is, in a particular manner, the Creator of men, of all men (v. 26): *He made of one blood all nations of men.* He made the first man, he makes every man, is the former of every man's body and the Father of every man's spirit. He has made the nations of men, not only all men in the nations, but as nations in their political capacity; he is their founder, and disposed them into communities for their mutual preservation and benefit. He made them all of one blood, of one and the same nature; *he fashions their heart alike.* Descended from one and the same common ancestor, in Adam they are all akin, so they are in Noah, that hereby they might be engaged in mutual affection and assistance, as fellow-

creatures and brethren. *Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?* Mal. ii. 10. *He hath made them to dwell on all the face of the earth*, which, as a bountiful benefactor, *he has given*, with all its fulness, *to the children of men.* He made them not to live in one place, but to be dispersed over all the earth; one nation therefore ought not to look with contempt upon another, as the Greeks did upon all other nations; for those on all the face of the earth are of the same blood. The Athenians boasted that they sprung out of their own earth, were *aborigines*, and nothing akin by blood to any other nation, which proud conceit of themselves the apostle here takes down.

4. That he is the great benefactor of the whole creation (v. 25): *He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.* He not only *breathed into the first man the breath of life* but still breathes it into every man. He gave us these souls; he formed the spirit of man within him. He not only gave us our life and breath, when he brought us into being, but he is continually giving them to us; his providence is a continued creation; he *holds our souls in life*; every moment our breath goes forth, but he graciously gives it us again the next moment; it is not only *his air that we breathe in, but it is in his hand that our breath is*, Dan. v. 23. *He gives to all the children of men their life and breath*; for as the meanest of the children of men live upon him, and receive from him, so the greatest, the wisest philosophers and mightiest potentates, cannot live without him. *He gives to all*, not only to all the children of men, but to the inferior creatures, to all animals, *every thing wherein is the breath of life* (Gen. vi. 17); they have their life and breath from him, and where he gives life and breath he gives all things, all other things needful for the support of life. *The earth is full of his goodness*, Ps. civ. 24, 27.

5. That he is the sovereign disposer of all the affairs of the children of men, according to the counsel of his will (v. 26): *He hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.* See here, (1.) The sovereignty of God's disposal concerning us: he *hath determined* every event, *ὁρίσας*, the matter is fixed; the disposals of Providence are incontestable and must not be disputed, unchangeable and cannot be altered. (2.) The wisdom of his disposals; he *hath determined* what was *before appointed*. The determinations of the Eternal Mind are not sudden resolves, but the counterparts of an eternal counsel, the copies of divine decrees. *He performeth the thing that is appointed for me*, Job xxiii. 14. *Whatever comes forth from God was before all worlds hid in God.* (3.) The things about which his providence is conversant; these are time and place: the times and places of our living in this world are determined and appointed by the God that made us. [1.] *He has determined the*

times that are concerning us. Times to us seem changeable, but God has fixed them. *Our times are in his hand*, to lengthen or shorten, embitter or sweeten, as he pleases. He has appointed and determined the time of our coming into the world, and the time of our continuance in the world; our time to be born, and our time to die (Eccl. iii. 1, 2), and all that little that lies between them—the time of all our concerns in this world. Whether they be prosperous times or calamitous times, it is he that has determined them; and on him we must depend, with reference to the times that are yet before us. [2.] He has also *determined and appointed the bounds of our habitation*. He that *appointed the earth to be a habitation for the children of men* has appointed to the children of men a distinction of habitations upon the earth, has instituted such a thing as property, to which he has set bounds to keep us from trespassing one upon another. The particular habitations in which our lot is cast, the place of our nativity and of our settlement, are of God's determining and appointing, which is a reason why we should accommodate ourselves to the habitations we are in, and make the best of that which is.

6. That *he is not far from every one of us*, v. 27. He is every where present, not only is *at our right hand*, but *has possessed our reins* (Ps. cxxxix. 13), has his eye upon us at all times, and knows us better than we know ourselves. Idolaters made images of God, that they might have him with them in those images, the absurdity of which the apostle here shows; for he is an infinite Spirit, *that is not far from any of us*, and never the nearer, but in one sense the further off from us, for our pretending to realize or presentiate him to ourselves by any image. He is nigh unto us, both to receive the homage we render him and to give the mercies we ask of him, wherever we are, though near no altar, image, or temple. The Lord of all, *as he is rich* (Rom. x. 12), so *he is nigh* (Deut. iv. 7), *to all that call upon him*. He that wills us *to pray every where*, assures us that he is no where far from us; whatever country, nation, or profession we are of, whatever our rank and condition in the world are, be we in a palace or in a cottage, in a crowd or in a corner, in a city or in a desert, in the depths of the sea or afar off upon the sea, this is certain, *God is not far from every one of us*.

7. That *in him we live, and move, and have our being*, v. 28. We have a necessary and constant dependence upon his providence, as the streams have upon the spring, and the beams upon the sun. (1.) *In him we live*; that is, the continuance of our lives is owing to him and the constant influence of his providence; *he is our life, and the length of our days*. It is not only owing to his patience and pity that our forfeited lives are not cut off, but it is owing to his power, and goodness, and fatherly care, that our frail lives

are prolonged. There needs not a positive act of his wrath to destroy us; if he suspend the positive acts of his goodness, we die of ourselves. (2.) *In him we move*; it is by the uninterrupted concurrence of his providence that our souls move in their outgoings and operations, that our thoughts run to and fro about a thousand subjects, and our affections run out towards their proper objects. It is likewise by him that our souls move our bodies; we cannot stir a hand, or foot, or a tongue, but by him, who, as he is the first cause, so he is the first mover. (3.) *In him we have our being*; not only from him we had it at first, but in him we have it still; to his continued care and goodness we owe it, not only that we have a being and are not sunk into nonentity, but that we have our being, have this being, were and still are of such a noble rank of beings, capable of knowing and enjoying God; and are not thrust into the meanness of brutes, nor the misery of devils.

8. That upon the whole matter we are *God's offspring*; he is our *Father that begat us* (Deut. xxxii. 6, 18), and he hath *nourished and brought us up as children*, Isa. i. 2. The confession of an adversary in such a case is always looked upon to be of use as *argumentum ad hominem*—an argument to the man, and therefore the apostle here quotes a saying of one of the Greek poets, Aratus, a native of Cilicia, Paul's countryman, who, in his *Phænomena*, in the beginning of his book, speaking of the heathen *Jupiter*, that is, in the poetical dialect, the supreme God, says this of him, *τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμεν*—for we are also his offspring. And he might have quoted other poets to the purpose of what he was speaking, that *in God we live and move*:—

*Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus  
Mens agitat molem.*

This active mind, infus'd through all the space,  
Unites and mingles with the mighty mass.—*Virgil, Æneid vi*

*Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo.*

'Tis the Divinity that warms our hearts.—*Ovid, Fast. vi.*

*Jupiter est quodcumque vides,  
Quodcumque moveris.*

Where'er you look, where'er you rove

The spacious scene is full of Jove.—*Lucan, lib. ii.*

But he chooses this of Aratus, as having much in a little. By this it appears not only that Paul was himself a scholar, but that human learning is both ornamental and serviceable to a gospel minister, especially for the convincing of those that are without; for it enables him to beat them at their own weapons, and to cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. How can the adversaries of truth be beaten out of their strong-holds by those that do not know them? It may likewise shame God's professing people, who forget their relation to God, and walk contrary to it, that a heathen poet could say of God, *We are his offspring*, formed by him, formed for him, more the care of his providence than ever any children were the care of their parents; and therefore are obliged to obey his commands, and acquiesce in his disposals, and *to be unto him for a name and*



a praise. Since in him and upon him we live, we ought to live to him; since in him we move, we ought to move towards him; and since in him we have our being, and from him we receive all the supports and comforts of our being, we ought to consecrate our being to him, and to apply to him for a new being, a better being, an eternal well-being.

III. From all these great truths concerning God, he infers the absurdity of their idolatry, as the prophets of old had done. If this be so, 1. Then God cannot be represented by an image. If we are the offspring of God, as we are spirits in flesh, then certainly he who is the Father of our spirits (and they are the principal part of us, and that part of us by which we are denominated God's offspring) is himself a Spirit, and we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device, v. 29. We wrong God, and put an affront upon him, if we think so. God honoured man in making his soul after his own likeness; but man dishonours God if he makes him after the likeness of his body. The Godhead is spiritual, infinite, immaterial, incomprehensible, and therefore it is a very false and unjust conception which an image gives us of God, be the matter ever so rich, gold or silver; be the shape ever so curious, and be it ever so well graven by art or man's device, its countenance, posture, or dress, ever so significant, it is a teacher of lies. 2. Then he dwells not in temples made with hands, v. 24. He is not invited to any temple men can build for him, nor confined to any. A temple brings him never the nearer to us, nor keeps him ever the longer among us. A temple is convenient for us to come together in to worship God; but God needs not any place of rest or residence, nor the magnificence and splendour of any structure, to add to the glory of his appearance. A pious, upright heart, a temple not made with hands, but by the Spirit of God, is that which he dwells in, and delights to dwell in. See 1 Kings viii. 27; Isa. lxvi. 1, 2. 3. Then he is not worshipped, Σεραπείσεται, he is not served, or ministered unto, with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, v. 25. He that made all, and maintains all, cannot be benefited by any of our services, nor needs them. If we receive and derive all from him, he is all-sufficient, and therefore cannot but be self-sufficient, and independent. What need can God have of our services, or what benefit can he have by them, when he has all perfection in himself, and we have nothing that is good but what we have from him? The philosophers, indeed, were sensible of this truth, that God has no need of us or our services; but the vulgar heathen built temples and offered sacrifices to their gods, with an opinion that they needed houses and food. See Job xxxv. 5—8; Ps. l. 8, &c. 4. Then it concerns us all to enquire after

God (v. 27). That they should seek the Lord, that is, fear and worship him in a right manner. Therefore God has kept the children of men in a constant dependence upon him for life and all the comforts of life, that he might keep them under constant obligations to him. We have plain indications of God's presence among us, his presidency over us, the care of his providence concerning us, and his bounty to us, that we might be put upon enquiring, *Where is God our Maker, who giveth songs in the night, who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?* Job xxxv. 10, 11. Nothing, one would think, should be more powerful with us to convince us that there is a God, and to engage us to seek his honour and glory in our services, and to seek our happiness in his favour and love, than the consideration of our own nature, especially the noble powers and faculties of our own souls. If we reflect upon these, and contemplate these, we may perceive both our relation and obligation to a God above us. Yet so dark is this discovery, in comparison with that by divine revelation, and so unapt are we to receive it, that those who have no other could but haply feel after God and find him. (1.) It was very uncertain whether they could by this searching find out God; it is but a peradventure: *if haply they might*. (2.) If they did find out something of God, yet it was but some confused notions of him; they did but feel after him, as men in the dark, or blind men, who lay hold on a thing that comes in their way, but know not whether it be that which they are in quest of or no. It is a very confused notion which this poet of theirs has of the relation between God and man, and very general, that *we are his offspring*: as was also that of their philosophers. Pythagoras said, *Θεῶν γένος ἐστί βροτοῖος—Men have a sort of a divine nature*. And Heraclitus (*apud Lucian*) being asked, *What are men?* answered, *Θεοὶ θνητοί—Mortal gods*; and, *What are the gods?* answered, *ἀθάνατοι ἄνθρωποι—Immortal men*. And Pindar saith (*Nemean, Ode 6*), *Ἐν ἀνδρῶν ἐν θεῶν γένος—God and man are near a-kin*. It is true that by the knowledge of ourselves we may be led to the knowledge of God, but it is a very confused knowledge. This, is but feeling after him. We have therefore reason to be thankful that by the gospel of Christ we have notices given us of God much clearer than we could have by the light of nature; we do not now feel after him, but *with open face behold, as in a glass, the glory of God*.

IV. He proceeds to call them all to repent of their idolatries, and to turn from them, v. 30, 31. This is the practical part of Paul's sermon before the university; having declared God to them (v. 23), he properly presses upon them *repentance towards God*, and would also have taught them *faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, if they had had the patience to hear him. Having shown



them the absurdity of their worshipping other gods, he persuades them to go on no longer in that foolish way of worship, but to return from it to the living and true God. Observe,

1. The conduct of God towards the Gentile world before the gospel came among them: *The times of this ignorance God winked at.* (1.) They were times of great ignorance. Human learning flourished more than ever in the Gentile world just before Christ's time; but in the things of God they were grossly ignorant. Those are ignorant indeed who either know not God or worship him ignorantly; idolatry was owing to ignorance. (2.) These times of ignorance God winked at. Understand it, [1.] As an act of divine justice. God despised or neglected these times of ignorance, and did not send them his gospel, as now he does. It was very provoking to him to see his glory thus given to another; and he detested and hated these times. So some take it. Or rather, [2.] As an act of divine patience and forbearance. He winked at these times; he did not restrain them from these idolatries by sending prophets to them, as he did to Israel; he did not punish them in their idolatries, as he did Israel; but gave them the gifts of his providence, *ch. xiv. 16, 17. These things thou hast done, and I kept silence*, Ps. l. 21. He did not give them such calls and motives to repentance as he does now. *He let them alone.* Because they did not improve the light they had, but were willingly ignorant, he did not send them greater lights. Or, he was not quick and severe with them, but was long-suffering towards them, because they did it ignorantly, 1 Tim. i. 13.

2. The charge God gave to the Gentile world by the gospel, which he now sent among them: *He now commandeth all men every where to repent*—to change their mind and their way, to be ashamed of their folly and to act more wisely, to break off the worship of idols and bind themselves to the worship of the true God. Nay, it is to turn with sorrow and shame from every sin, and with cheerfulness and resolution to every duty. (1.) This is God's command. It had been a great favour if he had only told us that there was room left for repentance, and we might be admitted to it; but he goes further, he interposes his own authority for our good, and has made that our duty which is our privilege. (2.) It is his command to all men, every where,—to men, and not to angels, that need it not,—to men, and not to devils, that are excluded the benefit of it,—to all men in all places; all men have made work for repentance, and have cause enough to repent, and all men are invited to repent, and shall have the benefit of it. The apostles are commissioned to preach this every where. The prophets were sent to command the Jews to repent; but the apostles were sent to preach *repentance and mission of sins to all nations.* (3.) Now in

gospel times it is more earnestly commanded, because more encouraged than it had been formerly. Now the way of remission is more opened than it had been, and the promise more fully confirmed; and therefore now he expects we should all repent. "Now repent; now at length, now in time, repent; for you have too long gone on in sin. Now in time repent, for it will be too late shortly."

3. The great reason to enforce this command, taken from the judgment to come. God commands us to repent, *because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness* (v. 31), and has now under the gospel made a clearer discovery of a state of retribution in the other world than ever before. Observe, (1.) The God that made the world will judge it; he that gave the children of men their being and faculties will call them to an account for the use they have made of them, and recompense them accordingly, whether the body served the soul in serving God or the soul was a drudge to the body in making provision for the flesh; and *every man shall receive according to the things done in the body*, 2 Cor. v. 10. The God that now governs the world will judge it; will reward the faithful friends of his government and punish the rebels. (2.) There is a day appointed for this general review of all that men have done in time, and a final determination of their state for eternity. The day is fixed in the counsel of God, and cannot be altered; but it is hid there, and cannot be known. A day of decision, a day of recompence, a day that will put a final period to all the days of time. (3.) The world will be judged in righteousness; for God is not unrighteous, who taketh vengeance; far be it from him that he should do iniquity. His knowledge of all men's characters and actions is infallibly true, and therefore his sentence upon them incontestably just. And, as there will be no appeal from it, so there will be no exception against it. (4.) God will judge the world *by that man whom he hath ordained*, who can be no other than the Lord Jesus, to whom all judgment is committed. By him God made the world, by him he redeemed it, by him he governs it, and by him he will judge it. (5.) God's raising Christ from the dead is the great proof of his being appointed and ordained the Judge of quick and dead. His doing him that honour evidenced his designing him this honour. His raising him from the dead was the beginning of his exaltation, his judging the world will be the perfection of it; and he that begins will make an end. God hath *given assurance unto all men*, sufficient ground for their faith to build upon, both that there is a judgment to come and that Christ will be their Judge; the matter is not left doubtful, but is of unquestionable certainty. Let all his enemies be assured of it, and tremble before him; let all his friends be assured of it, and triumph in him. (6.)



The consideration of the judgment to come, and of the great hand Christ will have in that judgment, should engage us all to repent of our sins and turn from them to God. This is the only way to make the Judge our friend in that day, which will be a terrible day to all who live and die impenitent; but true penitents will then *lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh.*

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*. 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

We have here a short account of the issue of Paul's preaching at Athens.

I. Few were the better: the gospel had as little success at Athens as any where; for the pride of the philosophers there, as of the Pharisees at Jerusalem, prejudiced them against the gospel of Christ. 1. Some ridiculed Paul and his preaching. They heard him patiently till he came to speak of the resurrection of the dead (v. 32), and then some of them began to hiss him: they *mocked*. What he had said before was somewhat like what they had sometimes heard in their own schools, and some notion they had of a resurrection, as it signifies a future state; but, if he speak of a *resurrection of the dead*, though it be of the resurrection of Christ himself, it is altogether incredible to them, and they cannot bear so much as to hear of it, as being contrary to a principle of their philosophy: *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus—Life when once lost is irrecoverable.* They had deified their heroes after their death, but never thought of their being raised from the dead, and therefore they could by no means reconcile themselves to this doctrine of Christ's being raised from the dead; how can this be? This great doctrine, which is the saints' joy, is their jest; when it was but mentioned to them they mocked, and made a laughing matter of it. We are not to think it strange if sacred truths of the greatest certainty and importance are made the scorn of profane wits. 2. Others were willing to take time to consider of it; they said, *We will hear thee again of this matter.* They would not at present comply with what Paul said, nor oppose it; but *we will hear thee again of this matter*, of the resurrection of the dead. It should seem, they overlooked what was plain and uncontroverted, and shifted off the application and the improvement of that, by starting objections against what was disputable, and would admit a debate. Thus many lose the benefit of the practical doctrine of Christianity, by wading

beyond their depth into controversy, or, rather, by objecting against that which has some difficulty in it; whereas, if any man were disposed and determined to *do the will of God*, as far as it is discovered to him, he should *know of the doctrine of Christ*, that it is *of God, and not of man*, John vii. 17. Those that would not yield to the present convictions of the word thought to get clear of them, as Felix did, by putting them off to another opportunity; they will hear of it again some time or other, but they know not when; and thus the devil cozens them of all their time, by cozening them of the present time. 3. Paul thereupon left them for the present to consider of it (v. 33): *He departed from amongst them*, as seeing little likelihood of doing any good with them at this time; but, it is likely, with a promise to those that were willing to hear him again that he would meet them whenever they pleased.

II. Yet there were some that were wrought upon, v. 34. If some would not, others would. 1. There were certain men that adhered to him, and believed. When he departed from amongst them, they would not part with him so; wherever he went, they would follow him, with a resolution to adhere to the doctrine he preached, which they believed. 2. Two are particularly named; one was an eminent man, *Dionysius the Areopagite*, one of that high court or great council that sat in Areopagus, or Mars' Hill—a judge, a senator, one of those before whom Paul was summoned to appear; his judge becomes his convert. The account which the ancients give of this Dionysius is that he was bred at Athens, had studied astrology in Egypt, where he took notice of the miraculous eclipse at our Saviour's passion,—that, returning to Athens, he became a senator, disputed with Paul, and was by him converted from his error and idolatry; and, being by him thoroughly instructed, was made the first bishop of Athens. So *Eusebius*, lib. v. cap. 4, lib. iv. cap. 22. The *woman named Damaris* was, as some think, the wife of Dionysius; but, rather, some other person of quality; and, though there was not so great a harvest gathered in at Athens as there was at other places, yet, these few being wrought upon there, Paul had no reason to say he had *laboured in vain*.

#### CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, I. Paul's coming to Corinth, his private converse with Aquila and Priscilla, and his public reasoning with the Jews, from whom, when they rejected him, he turned to the Gentiles, ver. 1—6. II. The great success of his ministry there, and the encouragement Christ gave him in a vision to continue his labours there, in hopes of further success, ver. 7—11. III. The molestations which after some time he met with there from the Jews, which he got pretty well through by the coldness of Gallio, the Roman governor, in the cause, ver. 12—17. IV. The progress Paul made through many countries, after he had continued long at Corinth, for the edifying and watering of the churches which he had founded and planted, in which circuit he made a short visit to Jerusalem, ver. 18—23. V. An account of Apollo's improvement in knowledge, and of his usefulness in the church, ver. 24—28.

**A**FTER these things Paul departed from Athens, and came

to Corinth; 2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome :) and came unto them. 3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. 5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ*. 6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

We do not find that Paul was much persecuted at Athens, nor that he was driven thence by any ill usage, as he was from those places where the Jews had or could make any interest; but his reception at Athens being cold, and little prospect of doing good there, he departed from Athens, leaving the care of those there who believed with Dionysius; and thence he came to Corinth, where he was now instrumental in planting a church that became on many accounts considerable. Corinth was the chief city of Achaia, now a province of the empire, a rich and splendid city. *Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum—It is not permitted every man to see Corinth*. The country thereabouts at this day is called *the Morea*. Now here we have,

I. Paul working for his living, *v. 2, 3*. 1. Though he was bred a scholar, yet he was master of a handicraft trade. He was a tentmaker, an upholsterer; he made tents for the use of soldiers and shepherds, of cloth or stuff, or (as some say tents were then generally made) of leather or skins, as the outer covering of the tabernacle. Hence to live in tents was to live *sub pellibus—under skins*. Dr. Lightfoot shows that it was the custom of the Jews to bring up their children to some trade, yea, though they gave them learning or estates. Rabbi Judah says, "He that teaches not his son a trade is as if he taught him to be a thief." And another says, "He that has a trade in his hand is as a vineyard that is fenced." An honest trade, by which a man may get his bread, is not to be looked upon by any with contempt. Paul, though a Pharisee, and bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, yet, having in his youth learned to make tents, did not by disuse lose the art. 2. Though

he was entitled to a maintenance from the churches he had planted, and from the people to whom he preached, yet he worked at his calling to get bread, which is more to his praise who did not ask for supplies than to theirs who did not supply him unasked, knowing what straits he was reduced to. See how humble Paul was, and wonder that so great a man could stoop so low; but he had learned condescension of his Master, who came not to be ministered to, but to minister. See how industrious he was, and how willing to take pains. He that had so much excellent work to do with his mind, yet, when there was occasion, did not think it below him to work with his hands. Even those that are redeemed from the curse of the law are not exempt from that sentence, *In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread*. See how careful Paul was to recommend his ministry, and to prevent prejudices against it, even the most unjust and unreasonable; he therefore maintained himself with his own labour that he might not make the gospel of Christ *burdensome*, 2 Cor. xi. 7, &c.; 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9. 3. Though we may suppose he was master of his trade, yet he did not disdain to work at journey-work: *He wrought with Aquila and Priscilla, who were of that calling*, so that he got no more than day-wages, a bare subsistence. Poor tradesmen must be thankful if their callings bring them in a maintenance for themselves and their families, though they cannot do as the rich merchants that raise estates by their callings. 4. Though he was himself a great apostle, yet he chose to work with Aquila and Priscilla, because he found them to be very intelligent in the things of God, as appears afterwards (*v. 26*), and he owns that they had been his *helpers in Christ Jesus*, Rom. xvi. 3. This is an example to those who are going to service to seek for those services in which they may have the best help for their souls. Choose to work with those that are likely to be helpers in Christ Jesus. It is good to be in company and to have conversation with those that will further us in the knowledge of Christ, and to put ourselves under the influence of such as are resolved that they will serve the Lord. Concerning this Aquila we are here told, (1.) That he was a Jew, but born in Pontus, *v. 2*. Many of the Jews of the dispersion were seated in that country, as appears 1 Pet. i. 1. (2.) That he was lately come from Italy to Corinth. It seems he often changed his habitation; this is not the world we can propose ourselves a settlement in. (3.) That the reason of his leaving Italy was because by a late edict of the emperor Claudius Cæsar all Jews were banished from Rome; for the Jews were generally hated, and every occasion was taken to put hardship and disgrace upon them. God's heritage was as a *speckled bird, the birds round about were against her*, Jer. xii. 9. Aquila, though a Christian, was banished because he had been a Jew; and



the Gentiles had such confused notions of the thing that they could not distinguish between a Jew and a Christian. Suetonius, in the life of Claudius, speaks of this decree in the ninth year of his reign, and says, The reason was because the Jews were a *turbulent people—assiduo tumultuantes*; and that it was *impulsore Christo—upon the account of Christ*; some zealous for him, others bitter against him, which occasioned great heats, such as gave umbrage to the government, and provoked the emperor, who was a timorous jealous man, to order them all to be gone. If Jews persecute Christians, it is not strange if heathens persecute them both.

II. We have here Paul preaching to the Jews, and dealing with them to bring them to the faith of Christ, both the native *Jews and the Greeks*, that is, those that were more or less proselyted to the Jewish religion, and frequented their meetings.

1. He reasoned with them in the synagogue publicly every sabbath. See in what way the apostles propagated the gospel, not by force and violence, by fire and sword, not by demanding an implicit consent, but by fair arguing; they drew with the cords of a man, gave a reason for what they said, and gave a liberty to object against it, having satisfactory answers ready. God invites us to come and reason with him (Isa. i. 18), and challenges sinners to produce their cause, and bring forth their strong reasons, Isa. xli. 21. Paul was a rational as well as a scriptural preacher.

2. He persuaded them—*πειθοί*. It denotes, (1.) The urgency of his preaching. He did not only dispute argumentatively with them, but he followed his arguments with affectionate persuasions, begging of them for God's sake, for their own soul's sake, for their children's sake, not to refuse the offer of salvation made to them. Or, (2.) The good effect of his preaching. He persuaded them, that is, he prevailed with them; so some understand it. *In sententiam suam adducebat—He brought them over to his own opinion*. Some of them were convinced by his reasonings, and yielded to Christ.

3. He was yet more earnest in this matter when his fellow-labourers, his seconds, came up with him (v. 5): *When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia*, and had brought him good tidings from the churches there, and were ready to assist him here, and strengthened his hands, then Paul was more than before pressed in spirit, which made him more than ever pressing in his preaching. He was grieved for the obstinacy and infidelity of his countrymen the Jews, was more intent than ever upon their conversion, and the love of Christ constrained him to it (2 Cor. v. 14); it is the word that is used here, it pressed him in spirit to it. And, being thus pressed, he testified to the Jews with all possible solemnity and seriousness, as that which he was perfectly well assured

of himself, and attested to them as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that *Jesus is the Christ*, the Messiah promised to the fathers and expected by them.

III. We have him here abandoning the unbelieving Jews, and turning from them to the Gentiles, as he had done in other places, v. 6.

1. Many of the Jews, and indeed the most of them, persisted in their contradiction to the gospel of Christ, and would not yield to the strongest reasonings nor the most winning persuasions; they opposed themselves and blasphemed; they set themselves in battle array (so the word signifies) against the gospel; they joined hand in hand to stop the progress of it. They resolved they would not believe it themselves, and would do all they could to keep others from believing it. They could not argue against it, but what was wanting in reason they made up in ill language: they blasphemed, spoke reproachfully of Christ, and in him of God himself, as Rev. xiii. 5, 6. To justify their infidelity, they broke out into downright blasphemy.

2. Paul hereupon declared himself discharged from them, and left them to perish in their unbelief. He that was pressed in spirit to testify to them (v. 5), when they opposed that testimony, and persisted in their opposition, was pressed in spirit to testify against them (v. 6), and his zeal herein also he showed by a sign: he shook his raiment, shaking off the dust from it (as before they shook off the dust from their feet, ch. xiii. 51), for a testimony against them. Thus he cleared himself from them, but threatened the judgments of God against them. As Pilate by washing his hands signified the devolving of the guilt of Christ's blood from himself upon the Jews, so Paul by shaking his raiment signified what he said, if possible to affect them with it. (1.) He had done his part, and was clean from the blood of their souls; he had, like a faithful watchman, given them warning, and thereby had delivered his soul, though he could not prevail to deliver theirs. He had tried all methods to work upon them, but all in vain, so that if they perish in their unbelief their blood is not to be required at his hands; here, and ch. xx. 26, he plainly refers to Ezek. xxxiii. 8, 9. It is very comfortable to a minister to have the testimony of his conscience for him, that he has faithfully discharged his trust by warning sinners. (2.) They would certainly perish if they persisted in their unbelief, and the blame would lie wholly upon themselves: "*Your blood be upon your own heads*, you will be your own destroyers, your nation will be ruined in this world, and particular persons will be ruined in the other world, and you alone shall bear it." If any thing would frighten them at last into a compliance with the gospel, surely this would.

3. Having given them over, yet he does not give over his work. Though Israel be not gathered, Christ and his gospel shall be glorious: *Henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles*; and the Jews cannot complain, for they had the first offer, and a fair one, made to them. The guests that were first invited will not come, and the provision must not be lost; guests must be had therefore *from the highways and the hedges*. "We would have gathered the Jews (Matt. xxiii. 37), would have healed them (Jer. li. 9), and they would not; but Christ must not be a head without a body, nor a foundation without a building, and therefore, if they will not, we must try whether others will." Thus the fall and diminishing of the Jews became the riches of the Gentiles; and Paul said this to their faces, not only because it was what he could justify, but to *provoke them to jealousy*, Rom. xi. 12, 14.

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. 8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized. 9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. 11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Here we are told,

I. That Paul changed his quarters. Christ directed his disciples, when he sent them forth, not to *go from house to house* (Luke x. 7), but there might be occasion to do it, as Paul did here. He departed out of the synagogue, being driven out by the perverseness of the unbelieving Jews, and he *entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, v. 7*. It should seem, he went to this man's house, not to lodge, for he continued with Aquila and Priscilla, but to preach. When the Jews would not let him go on peaceably with his work in their meeting, this honest man opened his doors to him, and told him he should be welcome to preach there; and Paul accepted the proposal. It was not the first time that God's ark had taken up its lodging in a private house. When Paul could not have liberty to preach in the synagogue, he preached in a house, without any disparagement to his doctrine. But observe the account of this man and his house. 1. The man was next door to a Jew; he was one

that worshipped God; he was not an idolater, though he was a Gentile, but was a worshipper of the God of Israel, and him only, as Cornelius. That Paul might give the less offence to the Jews, though he had abandoned them, he set up his meeting in this man's house. Even when he was under a necessity of breaking off from them to turn to the Gentiles, yet he would study to oblige them. 2. The house was next door to the synagogue, it *joined close to it*, which some perhaps might interpret as done with design to draw people from the synagogue to the meeting; but I rather think it was done in charity, to show that he would come as near to them as he could, and was ready to return to them if they were but willing to receive his message, and would not contradict and blaspheme as they had done.

II. That Paul presently saw the good fruit of his labours, both among Jews and Gentiles. 1. Crispus a Jew, an eminent one, the *chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord Jesus, with all his house, v. 8*. It was for the honour of the gospel that there were some rulers, and persons of the first rank both in church and state, that embraced it. This would leave the Jews inexcusable, that the ruler of their synagogue, who may be supposed to have excelled the rest in knowledge of the scriptures and zeal for their religion, believed the gospel, and yet they opposed and blasphemed it. Not only he, but his house, believed, and, probably, were baptized with him by Paul, 1 Cor. i. 14. 2. Many of the Corinthians, who were Gentiles (and some of them persons of bad character, as appears, 1 Cor. vi. 11, *such were some of you, hearing, believed, and were baptized*. First, they heard, for *faith comes by hearing*. Some perhaps came to hear Paul under some convictions of conscience that the way they were in was not right; but it is probable that the most came only for curiosity, because it was a new doctrine that was preached; but, hearing, *they believed*, by the power of God working upon them; and, *believing*, they were *baptized*, and so fixed for Christ, took upon them the profession of Christianity, and became entitled to the privileges of Christians.

III. That Paul was encouraged by a vision to go on with his work at Corinth (v. 9): *The Lord Jesus spoke to Paul in the night by a vision*; when he was musing on his work, *communing with his own heart upon his bed*, and considering whether he should continue here or no, what method he should take here, and what probability there was of doing good, then Christ appeared very seasonably to him, and in the *multitude of his thoughts within him* delighted his soul with divine consolations. 1. He renewed his commission and charge to preach the gospel: "*Be not afraid of the Jews*"; though they are very outrageous, and perhaps the more enraged by the conversion of the chief ruler of their synagogue. Be not



afraid of the magistrates of the city, for they have no power against thee but what is given them from above. It is the cause of heaven thou art pleading, do it boldly. *Be not afraid of thy words, nor dismayed at their looks; but speak, and hold not thy peace;* let slip no opportunity of speaking to them; *cry aloud, spare not.* Do not hold thy peace from speaking for fear of them, nor hold thy peace in speaking" (if I may so say); "do not speak shyly and with caution, but plainly and fully and with courage. Speak out; use all the liberty of spirit that becomes an ambassador for Christ." 2. He assured him of his presence with him, which was sufficient to animate him, and put life and spirit into him: "*Be not afraid, for I am with thee, to protect thee, and bear thee out, and to deliver thee from all thy fears; speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, to own what thou sayest, to work with thee, and to confirm the word by signs following.*" The same promise that ratified the general commission (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20), *Lo, I am with you always*, is here repeated. Those that have Christ with them need not to fear, and ought not to shrink. 3. He gave him a warrant of protection to save him harmless: "*No man shall set on thee to hurt thee;* thou shalt be delivered out of the hands of wicked and unreasonable men and shalt not be driven hence, as thou wast from other places, by persecution." He does not promise that no man should set on him (for the next news we hear is that he is set upon, and brought to the judgment-seat, v. 12), but, "*No man shall set on thee to hurt thee;* the remainder of their wrath shall be restrained; thou shalt not be beaten and imprisoned here, as thou wast at Philippi." Paul met with coarser treatment at first than he did afterwards, and was now comforted according to the time wherein he had been afflicted. Trials shall not last always, Ps. lxvi. 10—12. Or we may take it more generally: "*No man shall set on thee, τοῦ κακῶσαι σε—to do evil to thee;* whatever trouble they may give thee, there is no real evil in it. They may kill thee, but they cannot hurt thee; for *I am with thee,*" Ps. xxiii. 4; Isa. xli. 10. 4. He gave him a prospect of success: "*For I have much people in this city.* Therefore no man shall prevail to obstruct thy work, therefore I will be with thee to own thy work, and therefore do thou go on vigorously and cheerfully in it; for there are many in this city that are to be effectually called by thy ministry, in whom thou shalt see of the travail of thy soul." Λαὸς ἐστὶ μοι πολλός—*There is to me a great people here.* The Lord knows those that are his, yea, and those that shall be his; for it is by his work upon them that they become his, and known unto him are all his works. "I have them, though they yet know me not, though yet they are led captive by Satan at his will; for the Father has given them to me, to be a seed to serve me; I have them written

in the book of life; I have their names down, and of all that were given me I will lose none; I have them, for I am sure to have them;" *whom he did predestinate, those he called.* In this city, though it be a very profane wicked city, full of impurity, and the more so for a temple of Venus there, to which there was a great resort, yet in this heap, that seems to be all chaff, there is wheat; in this ore, that seems to be all dross, there is gold. Let us not despair concerning any place, when even in Corinth Christ had much people.

IV. That upon this encouragement he made a long stay there (v. 11): He continued at Corinth a year and six months, not to take his ease, but to follow his work, *teaching the word of God among them;* and, it being a city flocked to from all parts, he had opportunity there of preaching the gospel to strangers, and sending notice of it thence to other countries. He staid so long, 1. For the bringing in of those that were without Christ had many people there, and by the power of his grace he could have had them all converted in one month or week, as at the first preaching of the gospel, when thousands were enclosed at one cast of the net; but God works variously. The people Christ has at Corinth must be called in by degrees, some by one sermon, others by another; *we see not yet all things put under Christ.* Let Christ's ministers go on in their duty, though their work be not done all at once; nay, though it be done but a little at a time. 2. For the building up of those that were within. Those that are converted have still need to be *taught the word of God*, and particular need at Corinth to be taught it by Paul himself; for no sooner was the good seed sown in that field than the enemy came and sowed tares, the false apostles, those deceitful workers, of whom Paul in his epistles to the Corinthians complains so much. When the hands of Jewish persecutors were tied, who were professed enemies to the gospel, Paul had a more vexatious trouble created him, and the church more mischievous damage done it, by the tongue of judaizing preachers, who, under colour of the Christian name, undermined the very foundations of Christianity. Soon after Paul came to Corinth, it is supposed, he wrote the first epistle to the Thessalonians, which in order of time was the first of all the epistles he wrote by divine inspiration; and the second epistle to the same church was written not long after. Ministers may be serving Christ, and promoting the great ends of their ministry, by writing good letters, as well as by preaching good sermons.

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, 13 Saying, This fellow

persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 14 And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: 15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. 16 And he drave them from the judgment seat. 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

We have here an account of some disturbance given to Paul and his friends at Corinth, but no great harm done, nor much hindrance given to the work of Christ there.

I. Paul is accused by the Jews before the Roman governor, *v.* 12, 13. The governor was Gallio, deputy of Achaia, that is, proconsul; for Achaia was a consular province of the empire. This Gallio was elder brother to the famous Seneca; in his youth he was called Novatus, but took the name of Gallio upon his being adopted into the family of Julius Gallio; he is described by Seneca, his brother, to be a man of great ingenuousness and great probity, and a man of wonderful good temper; he was called *Dulcis Gallio*—Sweet Gallio, for his sweet disposition; and is said to have been universally beloved. Now observe, 1. How rudely Paul is apprehended, and brought before Gallio; *The Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul*. They were the ringleaders of all the mischief against Paul, and they entered into a confederacy to do him a mischief. They were unanimous in it: they came upon him *with one accord*; hand joined in hand to do this wickedness. They did it with violence and fury: *They made an insurrection* to the disturbance of the public peace, and hurried Paul away to the judgment-seat, and, for aught that appears, allowed him no time to prepare for his trial. 2. How falsely Paul is accused before Gallio (*v.* 13): *This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law*. They could not charge him with persuading men not to worship God at all, or to worship other gods (*Deut. xiii. 2*): but only to worship God in a way contrary to the law. The Romans allowed the Jews in their provinces the observance of their own law; and what then? Must those therefore be prosecuted as criminals who worship God in any other way? Does their toleration include a power of imposition? But the charge was unjust; for their own law had in it a promise of a prophet whom God would raise up to them, and him they should hear. Now Paul persuaded

them to believe in this prophet, who was come, and to hear him, which was according to the law; for he came not to *destroy the law, but to fulfil it*. The law relating to the temple-service those Jews at Corinth could not observe, because of their distance from Jerusalem, and there was no part of their synagogue-worship which Paul contradicted. Thus when people are taught to worship God in Christ, and to worship him in the Spirit, they are ready to quarrel, as if they were taught to worship him contrary to the law; whereas this is indeed perfective of the law.

II. Gallio, upon the first hearing, or rather without any hearing at all, dismisses the cause, and will not take any cognizance of it, *v.* 14, 15. Paul was going about to make his defence, and to show that he did not teach men to worship God contrary to the law; but the judge, being resolved not to pass any sentence upon this cause, would not give himself the trouble of examining it. Observe,

1. He shows himself very ready to do the part of a judge in any matter that it was proper for him to take cognizance of. He said to the Jews, that were the prosecutors, "*If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness*,—if you could charge the prisoner with theft or fraud, with murder or rapine, or any act of immorality,—I should think myself bound to bear with you in your complaints, though they were clamorous and noisy;" for the rudeness of the petitioners was no good reason, if their cause was just, why they should not have justice done them. It is the duty of magistrates to right the injured, and to animadvert upon the injurious; and, if the complaint be not made with all the decorum that might be, yet they should hear it out. But,

2. He will by no means allow them to make a complaint to him of a thing that was not within his jurisdiction (*v.* 15): "*If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look you to it*; end it among yourselves as you can, but I will be no judge of such matters; you shall neither burden my patience with the hearing of it, nor burden my conscience with giving judgment upon it;" and therefore, when they were urgent and pressing to be heard, *he drove them from the judgment-seat* (*v.* 16), and ordered another cause to be called. Now, (1.) Here was something right in Gallio's conduct, and praiseworthy—that he would not pretend to judge of things he did not understand; that he left the Jews to themselves in matters relating to their own religion, but yet would not let them, under pretence of that, run down Paul, and abuse him; or, at least, would not himself be the tool of their malice, to give judgment against him. He looked upon the matter to be not within his jurisdiction, and therefore would not meddle in it. But, (2.) It was certainly wrong to speak so slightly of a law and religion which he might have



known to be of God, and with which he ought to have acquainted himself. In what way God is to be worshipped, whether Jesus be the Messiah, whether the gospel be a divine revelation, were not *questions of words and names*, as he scornfully and profanely called them. They are questions of vast importance, and in which, if he had understood them himself aright, he would have seen himself nearly concerned. He speaks as if he boasted of his ignorance of the scriptures, and took a pride in it; as if it were below him to take notice of the law of God, or make any enquiries concerning it.

III. The abuse done to Sosthenes, and Gallio's unconcernedness in it, v. 17. 1. The parties put a great contempt upon the court, when *they took Sosthenes and beat him before the judgment-seat*. Many conjectures there are concerning this matter, because it is uncertain who this Sosthenes was, and who the Greeks were that abused him. It seems most probable that Sosthenes was a Christian, and Paul's particular friend, that appeared for him on this occasion, and probably had taken care of his safety, and conveyed him away, when Gallio dismissed the cause; so that, when they could not light on Paul, they fell foul on him who protected him. It is certain that there was one Sosthenes that was a friend of Paul, and well known at Corinth; it is likely he was a minister, for Paul calls him his brother, and joins him with himself in his first epistle to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. i. 1), as he does Timothy in his second, and it is probable that this was he; he is said to be a *ruler of the synagogue*, either joint-ruler with Crispus (v. 8), or a ruler of one synagogue, as Crispus was of another. As for the Greeks that abused him, it is very probable that they were either Hellenist Jews, or Jewish Greeks, those that joined with the Jews in opposing the gospel (v. 4, 6), and that the native Jews put them on to do it, thinking it would in them be less offensive. They were so enraged against Paul that they beat Sosthenes; and so enraged against Gallio, because he would not countenance the prosecution, that they beat him before the judgment-seat, whereby they did, in effect, tell him that they cared not for him; if he would not be their executioner, they would be their own judges. 2. The court put no less a contempt upon the cause, and the persons too. But *Gallio cared for none of these things*. If by this be meant that he cared not for the affronts of bad men, it was commendable. While he steadily adhered to the laws and rules of equity, he might despise their contempts; but, if it be meant (as I think it is) that he concerned not himself for the abuses done to good men, it carries his indifference too far, and gives us but an ill character of him. Here is *wickedness done in the place of judgment* (which Solomon complains of, Eccl. iii. 16), and nothing done to discountenance and suppress it. Gallio, as a judge, ought to

have protected Sosthenes, and restrained and punished the Greeks that assaulted him. For a man to be mobbed in the street or in the market, perhaps, may not be easily helped; but to be so in his court, the judgment-seat, the court sitting and not concerned at it, is an evidence that *truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter; for he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey*, Isa. lix. 14, 15. Those that see and hear of the sufferings of God's people, and have no sympathy with them, nor concern for them, do not pity and pray for them, it being all one to them whether the interests of religion sink or swim, are of the spirit of Gallio here, who, when a good man was abused before his face, *cared for none of these things*; like those that were at ease in Zion, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Amos vi. 6), like the king and Haman, that sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed, Esth. iii. 15.

18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow. 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; 21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. 22 And when he had landed at Cæsarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. 23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

We have here Paul in motion, as we have had him at Corinth for some time at rest, but in both busy, very busy, in the service of Christ; if he sat still, if he went about, still it was to do good. Here is,

I. Paul's departure from Corinth, v. 18. 1. He did not go away till some time after the trouble he met with there; from other places he had departed when the storm arose, but not from Corinth, because there it had no sooner risen than it fell again. Some tell us that Gallio did privately countenance Paul; and took him into his favour, and that this occasioned a correspondence between Paul and Seneca, Gallio's brother, which



some of the ancients speak of. *After this he tarried there yet a good while*, some think, *beyond the year and a half mentioned v. 11.* While he found he laboured not in vain, he continued labouring. 2. When he went, he took leave of the brethren solemnly, and with much affection, with suitable comforts and counsels, and prayers at parting, commending what was good, reproving what was otherwise, and giving them necessary cautions against the wiles of the false apostles; and his farewell sermon would leave impressions upon them. 3. He took *with him Priscilla and Aquila*, because they had a mind to accompany him; for they seemed disposed to remove, and not inclined to stay long at a place, a disposition which may arise from a good principle, and have good effects, and therefore ought not to be condemned in others, though it ought to be suspected in ourselves. There was a great friendship contracted between them and Paul, and therefore, when he went, they begged to go along with him. 4. At Cenchrea, which was hard by Corinth, the port where those that went to sea from Corinth took ship, either Paul or Aquila (for the original does not determine which) had his head shaved, to discharge himself from the vow of a Nazarite: *Having shorn his head at Cenchrea; for he had a vow.* Those that lived in Judea were, in such a case, bound to do it at the temple: but those who lived in other countries might do it in other places. The Nazarite's head was to be shaved when either his consecration was accidentally polluted, in which case he must begin again, or when the days of his separation were fulfilled (Num. vi. 9; xiii. 18), which, we suppose, was the case here. Some throw it upon Aquila, who was a Jew (v. 2), and retained perhaps more of his Judaism than was convenient; but I see no harm in admitting it concerning Paul, for concerning him we must admit the same thing (ch. xxi. 24, 26), not only in compliance for a time with the Jews, to whom he became as a Jew (1 Cor. ix. 20), *that he might win upon them*, but because the vow of the Nazarites, though ceremonial, and as such ready to vanish away, had yet a great deal of moral and very pious significance, and therefore was fit to die the last of all the Jewish ceremonies. The Nazarites are joined with the prophets (Amos ii. 11), and were very much the glory of Israel (Lam. iv. 7), and therefore it is not strange if Paul bound himself for some time with the vow of a Nazarite from wine and strong drink, and from being trimmed, to recommend himself to the Jews; and from this he now discharged himself.

II. Paul's calling at Ephesus, which was the metropolis of the Lesser Asia, and a sea-port. 1. *There he left Aquila and Priscilla*; not only because they would be but burdensome to him in his journey, but because they might be serviceable to the inter-

ests of the gospel at Ephesus. Paul intended shortly to settle there for some time, and he left Aquila and Priscilla there in the mean time, for the same end as Christ sent his disciples before to every place where he himself would come, to prepare his way. Aquila and Priscilla might, by private conversation, being very intelligent judicious Christians, dispose the minds of many to give Paul, when he should come among them, a favourable reception, and to understand his preaching; therefore he calls them his *helpers in Christ Jesus*, Rom. xvi. 3. 2. *There he preached to the Jews in their synagogue*; though he did but call there in his journey, yet he would not go without giving them a sermon. *He entered into the synagogue*, not as a hearer, but as a preacher, *for there he reasoned with the Jews.* Though he had abandoned the Jews at Corinth, who opposed themselves, and blasphemed, yet he did not, for their sakes, decline the synagogues of the Jews in other places, but still made the first offer of the gospel to them. We must not condemn a whole body or denomination of men, for the sake of some that conduct themselves ill. 3. The Jews at Ephesus were so far from driving Paul away that they courted his stay with them (v. 20): *They desired him to tarry longer with them*, to instruct them in the gospel of Christ. These were more noble, and better bred, than those Jews at Corinth, and other places; and it was a sign that God had not quite cast away his people, but had a remnant among them. 4. Paul would not stay with them now: *He consented not; but bade them farewell.* He had further to go; he must by all means keep this feast at Jerusalem; not that he thought himself bound in duty to it (he knew the laws of the feasts were no longer binding), but he had business at Jerusalem (whatever it was) which would be best done at the time of the feast, when there was a general rendezvous of all the Jews from all parts; which of the feasts it was we are not told, probably it was the passover, which was the most eminent. 5. He intimated his purpose, after this journey, to come and spend some time at Ephesus, being encouraged by their kind invitation to hope that he should do good among them. It is good to have opportunities in reserve, when one good work is over to have another to apply ourselves to: *I will return again to you*, but he inserts that necessary proviso, *if God will.* Our times are in God's hand; we purpose, but he disposes; and therefore we must make all our promises with submission to the will of God. *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. I will return again to you, if the Spirit suffer me* (ch. xvi. 7); this was included in Paul's case; not only if providence permit, but if God do not otherwise direct my motions.

III. Paul's visit to Jerusalem; a short



visit it was, but it served as a token of respect to that truly mother-church. 1. He came by sea to the port that lay next to Jerusalem. *He sailed from Ephesus (v. 21), and landed at Cæsarea, v. 22.* He chose to go by sea, for expedition and for safety, and that he might see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. Joppa had been the port for Jerusalem, but Herod having improved Cæsarea, and the port at Joppa being dangerous, that was generally made use of. 2. He went up, and saluted the church, by which, I think, is plainly meant the church at Jerusalem, which is emphatically called the church, because there the Christian church began, *ch. xv. 4.* Paul thought it requisite to show himself among them, that they might not think his success among the Gentiles had made him think himself either above them or estranged from them, or that the honour God had put upon him made him unmindful of the honour he owed to them. His going to salute the church at Jerusalem intimates, (1.) That it was a very friendly visit that he made them, in pure kindness, to enquire into their state, and to testify his hearty good-will to them. Note, The increase of our new friends should not make us forget our old ones, but it should be a pleasure to good men, and good ministers, to revive former acquaintance. The ministers at Jerusalem were constant residents, Paul was a constant itinerant; but he took care to keep up a good correspondence with them, that they might rejoice with him in his going out, and he might rejoice with them in their tents, and they might both congratulate and wish well to one another's comfort and success. (2.) That it was but a short visit. He went up, and saluted them, perhaps with the holy kiss, and made no stay among them. It was designed but for a transient interview, and yet Paul undertook this long journey for that. This is not the world we are to be together in. God's people are the salt of the earth, dispersed and scattered; yet it is good to see one another sometimes, if it be but to see one another, that we may confirm mutual love, may the better keep up our spiritual communion with one another at a distance, and may long the more for that heavenly Jerusalem in which we hope to be together for ever.

IV. His return through those countries where he had formerly preached the gospel. 1. *He went and spent some time in Antioch,* among his old friends there, whence he was first sent out to preach among the Gentiles, *ch. xiii. 1.* He went down to Antioch, to refresh himself with the sight and conversation of the ministers there; and a very good refreshment it is to a faithful minister to have for awhile the society of his brethren; for, *as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the countenance of his friend.* Paul's coming to Antioch would bring to remembrance the former days, which would furnish him with

matter for fresh thanksgiving. 2. *Thence he went over the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order,* where he had preached the gospel, and planted churches, which, though very briefly mentioned (*ch. xvi. 6*), was yet a glorious work, as appears by *Gal. iv. 14, 15*, where Paul speaks of his preaching the gospel to the Galatians at the first, and their receiving him as an angel of God. These country churches (for such they were (*Gal. i. 2*), and we read not of any city in Galatia where a church was) Paul visited in order as they lay, watering what he had been instrumental to plant, and strengthening all the disciples. His very coming among them, and owning them, were a great strengthening to them and their ministers. Paul's countenancing them was encouraging them; but that was not all: he preached that to them which strengthened them, which confirmed their faith in Christ, their resolutions for Christ, and their pious affections to him. Disciples need to be strengthened, for they are compassed about with infirmity; ministers must do what they can to strengthen them, to strengthen them all, by directing them to Christ, and bringing them to live upon him, whose strength is perfected in their weakness, and who is himself their strength and song.

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. 27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

The sacred history leaves Paul upon his travels, and goes here to meet Apollos at Ephesus, and to give us some account of him, which was necessary to our understanding some passages in Paul's epistles.

1. Here is an account of his character, when he came to Ephesus.

1. He was a Jew, born at Alexandria in



Egypt, but of Jewish parents ; for there were abundance of Jews in that city, since the dispersion of the people, as it was foretold (Deut. xxviii. 68): *The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again.* His name was not *Apollo*, the name of one of the heathen gods, but *Apollos*, some think the same with *Apelles*, Rom. xvi. 10.

2. He was a man of excellent good parts, and well fitted for public service. He was *an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures* of the Old Testament, in the knowledge of which he was, as a Jew, brought up. (1.) He had a great command of language: he was *an eloquent man*; he was *ἀνὴρ λόγιος*—*a prudent man*, so some; *a learned man*, so others; *historiarum peritus*—*a good historian*, which is an excellent qualification for the ministry: he was one that could speak well, so it properly signifies; he was *an oracle of a man*; he was famous for speaking pertinently and closely, fully and fluently, upon any subject. (2.) He had a great command of scripture-language, and this was the eloquence he was remarkable for. He came to *Ephesus*, being *mighty in the scriptures*, so the words are placed; having an excellent faculty of expounding scripture, he came to *Ephesus*, which was a public place, to trade with that talent, for the honour of God and the good of many. He was not only ready in the scriptures, able to quote texts off-hand, and repeat them, and tell you where to find them (many of the carnal Jews were so, who were therefore said to have the *form of knowledge*, and the *letter of the law*); but he was *mighty in the scriptures*. He understood the sense and meaning of them, he knew how to make use of them and to apply them, how to reason out of the scriptures, and to reason strongly; a convincing, commanding, confirming power went along with all his expositions and applications of the scripture. It is probable he had given proof of his knowledge of the scriptures, and his abilities in them, in many synagogues of the Jews.

3. He was instructed in the way of the Lord; that is, he had some acquaintance with the doctrine of Christ, had obtained some general notions of the gospel and the principles of Christianity, *that Jesus is the Christ*, and *that prophet that should come into the world*; the first notice of this would be readily embraced by one that was so mighty in the scripture as Apollos was, and therefore understood the signs of the times. He was instructed, *κατηχημένος*—*he was catechised* (so the word is), either by his parents or by ministers; he was taught something of Christ and the way of salvation by him. Those that are to teach others must first be themselves taught the word of the Lord, not only to talk of it, but to walk in it. It is not enough to have our tongues tuned to the word of the Lord, but we must have our feet directed into the way of the Lord.

4. Yet he knew only the baptism of John;

he was instructed in the gospel of Christ as far as John's ministry would carry him, and no further; he knew *the preparing of the way of the Lord by that voice crying in the wilderness*, rather than the way of the Lord itself. We cannot but think he had heard of Christ's death and resurrection, but he was not let into the mystery of them, had not had opportunity of conversing with any of the apostles since the pouring out of the Spirit; or he had himself been baptized *only with the baptism of John*, but was not baptized with the Holy Ghost, as the disciples were at the day of pentecost.

II. We have here the employment and improvement of his gifts at Ephesus; he came thither, seeking opportunities of doing and getting good, and he found both.

1. He there made a very good use of his gifts in public. He came, probably, recommended to the synagogue of the Jews as a fit man to be a teacher there, and according to the light he had, and *the measure of the gift given to him*, he was willing to be employed (v. 25): *Being fervent in the Spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord.* Though he had not the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as the apostles had, he made use of the gifts he had; *for the dispensation of the Spirit*, whatever the measure of it is, *is given to every man to profit withal.* And our Saviour, by a parable, designed to teach his ministers that though they had but one talent they must not bury that. We have seen how Apollos was qualified with a good head and a good tongue: he was *an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures*; he had laid in a good stock of useful knowledge, and had an excellent faculty of communicating it. Let us now see what he had further to recommend him as a preacher; and his example is recommended to the imitation of all preachers. (1.) He was a lively affectionate preacher; as he had a good head, so he had a good heart; he was *fervent in Spirit*. He had in him a great deal of divine fire as well as divine light, was burning as well as shining. He was full of zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of precious souls. This appeared both in his forwardness to preach when he was called to it by *the rulers of the synagogue*, and in his fervency in his preaching. He preached as one in earnest, and that had his heart in his work. What a happy composition was here! Many are fervent in spirit, but are weak in knowledge, in scripture-knowledge—have far to seek for proper words, and are full of improper ones; and, on the other hand, many are eloquent enough, and mighty in the scriptures, and learned, and judicious, but they have no life or fervency. Here was a complete man of God, *thoroughly furnished for his work*; both eloquent and fervent, full both of divine knowledge and of divine affections. (2.) He was an industrious laborious preacher. *He spoke and taught diligently.* He took pains



in his preaching, what he delivered was elaborate; and he did not offer that to God, or to the synagogue, that either cost nothing or cost him nothing. He first worked it upon his own heart, and then laboured to impress it on those he preached to: *he taught diligently, ἀκριβῶς—accurately, exactly; every thing he said was well-weighed.* (3.) He was an evangelical preacher. Though he knew only the baptism of John, yet that was the beginning of the gospel of Christ, and to that he kept close; for he taught the things of the Lord, of the Lord Christ, the things that tended to make way for him, and to set him up. The things pertaining to the kingdom of the Messiah were the subjects he chose to insist upon; not the things of the ceremonial law, though those would be pleasing to his Jewish auditors; not the things of the Gentile philosophy, though he could have discoursed very well on those things; but the things of the Lord. (4.) He was a courageous preacher: *He began to speak boldly in the synagogue*, as one who, having put confidence in God, did not fear the face of man; he spoke as one that knew the truth of what he said, and had no doubt of it, and that knew the worth of what he said and was not afraid to suffer for it; *in the synagogue*, where the Jews not only were present, but had power, there he preached the things of God, which he knew they were prejudiced against.

2. He there made a good increase of his gifts in private, not so much in study, as in conversation with *Aquila and Priscilla*. If Paul or some other apostle or evangelist had been at Ephesus, he would have instructed him; but, for want of better help, *Aquila and Priscilla* (who were tent-makers) *expounded to him the way of God more perfectly.* Observe, (1.) *Aquila and Priscilla* heard him preach in the synagogue. Though in knowledge he was much inferior to them, yet, having excellent gifts for public service, they encouraged his ministry, by a diligent and constant attendance upon it. Thus young ministers, that are hopeful, should be countenanced by grown Christians, for it becomes them to fulfil all righteousness. (2.) Finding him defective in his knowledge of Christianity, *they took him to them*, to lodge in the same house with them, and *expounded to him the way of God*, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, *more perfectly.* They did not take occasion from what they observed of his deficiency either to despise him themselves, or to disparage him to others; did not call him a young raw preacher, not fit to come into a pulpit, but considered the disadvantages he had laboured under, as knowing only the baptism of John; and, having themselves got great knowledge in the truths of the gospel by their long and intimate conversation with Paul, they communicated what they knew to him, and gave him a clear, distinct, and methodical account of those

things which before he had but confused notions of. [1.] See here an instance of that which Christ has promised, that: *to him that hath shall be given; he that has, and uses what he has, shall have more.* He that diligently traded with the talent he had doubled it quickly. [2.] See an instance of truly Christian charity in *Aquila and Priscilla*; they did good according to their ability. *Aquila*, though a man of great knowledge, yet did not undertake to speak in the synagogue, because he had not such gifts for public work as *Apollos* had; but he furnished *Apollos* with matter, and then left him to clothe it with acceptable words. Instructing young Christians and young ministers privately in conversation, who mean well, and perform well, as far as they go, is a piece of very good service, both to them and to the church. [3.] See an instance of great humility in *Apollos*. He was a very bright young man, of great parts and learning, newly come from the university, a popular preacher, and one mightily cried up and followed; and yet, finding that *Aquila and Priscilla* were judicious serious Christians, that could speak intelligently and experimentally of the things of God, though they were but mechanics, poor tent-makers, he was glad to receive instructions from them, to be shown by them his defects and mistakes, and to have his mistakes rectified by them, and his deficiencies made up. Young scholars may gain a great deal by converse with old Christians, as young students in the law may by old practitioners. *Apollos*, though he was *instructed in the way of the Lord*, did not rest in the knowledge he had attained, nor thought he understood Christianity as well as any man (which proud conceited young men are apt to do), but was willing to have it expounded to him more perfectly. Those that know much should covet to know more, and what they know to know it better, pressing forward towards perfection. [4.] Here is an instance of a good woman, though not permitted to speak in the church or in the synagogue, yet doing good with the knowledge God had given her in private converse. Paul will have *the aged women to be teachers of good things* Tit. ii. 3, 4.

III. Here is his preferment to the service of the church of Corinth, which was a larger sphere of usefulness than Ephesus at present was. Paul had set the wheels a-going in Achaia and particularly at Corinth, the county-town. Many were stirred up by his preaching to receive the gospel, and they needed to be confirmed; and many were likewise irritated to oppose the gospel, and they needed to be confuted. Paul was gone, was called away to other work, and now there was a fair occasion in this vacancy for *Apollos* to set in, who was fitted rather to water than to plant, to build up those that were within than to bring in those that were without. Now here we have,

1. His call to this service. not by a vision,



as Paul was called to Macedonia, no, nor so much as by the invitation of those he was to go to; but, (1.) He himself inclined to go: *He was disposed to pass into Achaia*; having heard of the state of the churches there, he had a mind to try what good he could do among them. Though there were those there who were eminent for spiritual gifts, yet Apollos thought there might be some work for him, and God disposed his mind that way. (2.) His friends encouraged him to go, and approved of his purpose; and, he being a perfect stranger there, they gave him a testimonial or letters of recommendation, exhorting the disciples in Achaia to entertain him and employ him. In this way, among others, the communion of churches is kept up, by the recommending of members and ministers to each other, when ministers, as Apollos here, are disposed to remove. Though those at Ephesus had a great loss of his labours, they did not grudge those in Achaia the benefit of them; but, on the contrary, used their interest in them to introduce him; for the churches of Christ, though they are many, yet they are one.

2. His success in this service, which both ways answered his intention and expectation; for,

(1.) Believers were greatly edified, and those that had received the gospel were very much confirmed: *He helped those much who had believed through grace*. Note, [1.] Those who believe in Christ, it is through grace that they believe; it is *not of themselves, it is God's gift to them*; it is his work in them. [2.] Those who through grace do believe, yet still have need of help; as long as they are here in this world there are remainders of unbelief, and something lacking in their faith to be perfected, and the work of faith to be fulfilled. [3.] Faithful ministers are capable of being in many ways helpful to those who through grace do believe, and it is their business to help them, to help them much; and, when a divine power goes along with them, they will be helpful to them.

(2.) Unbelievers were greatly mortified. Their objections were fully answered, the folly and sophistry of their arguments were discovered, so that they had nothing to say in defence of the opposition they made to the gospel; their mouths were stopped, and their faces filled with shame (v. 28): *He mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly*, before the people; he did it, *εὐρώτως*—earnestly, and with a great deal of vehemence; he took pains to do it; his heart was upon it, as one that was truly desirous both to serve the cause of Christ and to save the souls of men. He did it effectually and to universal satisfaction. He did it *levi negotio*—with facility. The case was so plain, and the arguments were so strong on Christ's side, that it was an easy matter to baffle all that the Jews could say against it. Though they were so fierce, yet their cause was so weak that he made no-

thing of their opposition. Now that which he aimed to convince them of was *that Jesus is the Christ*, that he is *the Messiah promised to the fathers, who should come*, and they were to look for no other. If the Jews were but convinced of this—that Jesus is Christ, even their own law would teach them to hear him. Note, The business of ministers is to preach Christ: *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*. The way he took to convince them was *by the scriptures*; thence he fetched his arguments; for the Jews owned the scriptures to be of divine authority, and it was easy for him, who was mighty in the scriptures, from them to show that Jesus is the Christ. Note, Ministers must be able not only to preach the truth, but to prove it and defend it, and to convince gainsayers with meekness and yet with power, instructing those that oppose themselves; and this is real service to the church.

#### CHAP. XIX.

We left Paul in his circuit visiting the churches (ch. xviii. 23), but we have not forgotten, nor has he, the promise he made to his friends at Ephesus, to return to them, and make some stay there; now this chapter shows us his performance of that promise, his coming to Ephesus, and his continuance there two years; we are here told, 1. How he laboured there in the word and doctrine, how he taught some weak believers that had gone no further than John's baptism (ver. 1-7), how he taught three months in the synagogue of the Jews (ver. 8), and, when he was driven thence, how he taught the Gentiles a long time in a public school (ver. 9, 10), and how he confirmed his doctrine by miracles, ver. 11, 12. 11. What was the fruit of his labor, particularly among the conjurers, the worst of sinners: some were confounded, that did but make use of his name (ver. 13-17), but others were converted, that received and embraced his doctrine, ver. 18-20. 111. What projects he had of further usefulness (ver. 21, 22), and what trouble at length he met with at Ephesus from the silversmiths, which forced him thence to pursue the measures he had laid; how a mob was raised by Demetrius to cry up Diana (ver. 23-34), and how it was suppressed and dispersed by the town-clerk, ver. 35-41.

AND it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7 And all the men were about twelve.

Ephesus was a city of great note in Asia, famous for a temple built there to Diana,



which was one of the wonders of the world: thither Paul came to preach the gospel while Apollos was at Corinth (v. 1); while he was watering there, Paul was planting here, and grudged not that Apollos entered into his labours and was building upon his foundation, but rejoiced in it, and went on in the new work that was cut out for him at Ephesus with the more cheerfulness and satisfaction, because he knew that such an able minister of the New Testament as Apollos was now at Corinth, carrying on the good work there. Though there were those that made him the head of a party against Paul (1 Cor. i. 12), yet Paul had no jealousy of him, nor any way disliked the affection the people had for him. Paul having gone through the country of Galatia and Phrygia, having passed through the upper coasts, Pontus and Bithynia, that lay north, at length came to Ephesus, where he had left Aquila and Priscilla, and there found them. At his first coming, he met with some disciples there, who professed faith in Christ as the true Messiah, but were as yet in the first and lowest form in the school of Christ, under his usher John the Baptist. They were in number about twelve (v. 7); they were much of the standing that Apollos was of when he came to Ephesus (for he knew only the baptism of John, ch. xviii. 25), but they had not opportunity of being acquainted with Aquila and Priscilla, or had not been so long in Ephesus or were not so willing to receive instruction as Apollos was, otherwise they might have had the way of God expounded to them more perfectly, as Apollos had. Observe here,

I. How Paul catechised them. He was told, probably by Aquila and Priscilla, that they were believers, that they did own Christ, and had given up their names to him; now Paul hereupon takes them under examination.

1. They did believe in the Son of God; but Paul enquires whether they had received the Holy Ghost,—whether they believed in the Spirit, whose operations on the minds of men, for conviction, conversion, and comfort, were revealed some time after the doctrine of Jesus being the Christ,—whether they had been acquainted with, and had admitted, this revelation? This was not all; extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were conferred upon the apostles and other disciples presently after Christ's ascension, which was frequently repeated upon occasion; had they participated in these gifts? “Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? Have you had that seal of the truth of Christ's doctrine in yourselves?” We are not now to expect any such extraordinary gifts as they had then. The canon of the New Testament being long since completed and ratified, we depend upon that as the most sure word of prophecy. But there are graces of the Spirit given to all believers, which are as earnest to them, 2 Cor. i. 22; v. 5; Eph. i. 13, 14. Now it concerns us

all who profess the Christian faith seriously to enquire whether we have received the Holy Ghost or not. The Holy Ghost is promised to all believers, to all petitioners (Luke xi. 13); but many are deceived in this matter, thinking they have received the Holy Ghost when really they have not. As there are pretenders to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, so there are to his graces and comforts; we should therefore strictly examine ourselves, Have we received the Holy Ghost since we believed? The tree will be known by its fruits. Do we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? Are we led by the Spirit? Do we walk in the Spirit? Are we under the government of the Spirit?

2. They owned their ignorance in this matter: “Whether there be a Holy Ghost is more than we know. That there is a promise of the Holy Ghost we know from the scriptures of the Old Testament, and that this promise will be fulfilled in its season we doubt not; but so much have we been out of the way of intelligence in this matter that we have not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost be indeed yet given as a Spirit of prophecy.” They knew (as Dr. Lightfoot observes) that, according to the tradition of their nation, after the death of Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Ghost departed from Israel, and went up; and they professed that they had never heard of his return. They spoke as if they expected it, and wondered they did not hear of it, and were ready to welcome the notice of it. The gospel light, like that of the morning, shone more and more, gradually; not only clearer and clearer, in the discovery of truths not before heard of, but further and further, in the discovery of them to persons that had not before heard of them.

3. Paul enquired how they came to be baptized, if they knew nothing of the Holy Ghost; for, if they were baptized by any of Christ's ministers, they were instructed concerning the Holy Ghost, and were baptized in his name. “Know you not that Jesus being glorified, consequently the Holy Ghost is given? unto what then were you baptized? This is strange and unaccountable. What! baptized, and yet know nothing of the Holy Ghost? Surely your baptism was a nullity, if you know nothing of the Holy Ghost; for it is the receiving of the Holy Ghost that is signified and sealed by that washing of regeneration. Ignorance of the Holy Ghost is as inconsistent with a sincere profession of Christianity as ignorance of Christ is.” Applying it to ourselves, it intimates that those are baptized to no purpose, and have received the grace of God therein in vain, that do not receive and submit to the Holy Ghost. It is also an enquiry we should often make, not only to whose honour we were born, but into whose service we were baptized, that we may study to answer the ends both of our birth and of our baptism. Let us often consider



unto what we were baptized, that we may live up to our baptism.

4. They own that they were baptized *unto John's baptism*—*εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα*—that is, as I take it, they were baptized in the name of John, not by John himself (he was far enough from any such thought), but by some weak, well-meaning disciple of his, that ignorantly kept up his name as the head of a party, retaining the spirit and notion of those disciples of his that were jealous of the growth of Christ's interest, and complained to him of it, John iii. 26. Some one or more of these, that found themselves much edified by John's baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, not thinking that the kingdom of heaven, which he spoke of as at hand, was so very near as it proved, ran away with that notion, rested in what they had, and thought they could not do better than to persuade others to do so too; and so, ignorantly, in a blind zeal for John's doctrine, they baptized here and there one in John's name, or, as it is here expressed, *unto John's baptism*, looking no further themselves, nor directing those that they baptized any further.

5. Paul explains to them the true intent and meaning of John's baptism, as principally referring to Jesus Christ, and so rectifies the mistake of those who had baptized them into the baptism of John, and had not directed them to look any further, but to rest in that. Those that have been left in ignorance, or led into error, by any infelicities of their education, should not therefore be despised nor rejected by those who are more knowing and orthodox, but should be compassionately instructed, and better taught, as these disciples were by Paul. (1.) He owns that John's baptism was a very good thing, as far as it went: *John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance*. By this baptism he required people to be sorry for their sins, and to confess them and turn from them; and to bring any to this is a great point gained. But, (2.) He shows them that John's baptism had a further reference, and he never designed that those he baptized should rest there, but told them that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus,—that his baptism of repentance was designed only to prepare the way of the Lord, and to dispose them to receive and entertain Christ, whom he left them big with expectations of; nay, whom he directed them to: *Behold the Lamb of God*. "John was a great and good man; but he was only the harbinger,—Christ is the Prince. His baptism was the porch which you were to pass through, not the house you were to rest in; and therefore it was all wrong for you to be baptized into the baptism of John."

6. When they were thus shown the error they were led into, they thankfully accepted the discovery, and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, v. 5. As for Apollos, of whom it was said (ch. xviii. 25) that he knew

the baptism of John—that he rightly understood the meaning of it when he was baptized with it, though he knew that *only*—yet, when he understood the way of God more perfectly, he was not again baptized, any more than Christ's first disciples that had been baptized with John's baptism and knew it referred to the Messiah at the door (and, with an eye to this, submitted to it), were baptized again. But to these disciples, who received it only with an eye to John and looked no further, as if he were their saviour, it was such a fundamental error as was as fatal to it as it would have been for any to be baptized in the name of Paul (1 Cor. i. 13); and therefore, when they came to understand things better, they desired to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and were so: not by Paul himself, as we have reason to think, but by some of those who attended him. It does not therefore follow hence that there was not an agreement between John's baptism and Christ's, or that they were not for substance the same; much less does it follow that those who have been once baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (which is the appointed form of Christ's baptism), may be again baptized in the same name; for those that were here baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus had never been so baptized before.

II. How Paul conferred the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost upon them, v. 6. 1. Paul solemnly *prayed to God* to give them those gifts, signified by his *laying his hands on them*, which was a gesture used in blessing by the patriarchs, especially in conveying the great trust of the promise, as Gen. xlviii. 14. The Spirit being the great promise of the New Testament, the apostles conveyed it by the imposition of hands: "The Lord bless thee with that blessing, that blessing of blessings," Isa. xlv. 3. 2. God granted the thing he prayed for: *The Holy Ghost came upon them* in a surprising overpowering manner, and *they spoke with tongues and prophesied*, as the apostles did and the first Gentile converts, ch. x. 44. This was intended to introduce the gospel at Ephesus, and to awaken in the minds of men an expectation of some great things from it; and some think that it was further designed to qualify these twelve men for the work of the ministry, and that these twelve were the elders of Ephesus, to whom Paul committed the care and government of that church. They had the Spirit of prophesy, that they might understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God themselves, and the gift of tongues, that they might preach them to every nation and language. Oh, what a wonderful change was here made on a sudden in these men! those that but just now had *not so much as heard that there was any Holy Ghost* are now themselves filled with the Holy Ghost; for the Spirit, like the wind, blows where and when he listeth.

8 And he went into the syna-



gogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. 9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. 11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Paul is here very busy at Ephesus to do good.

I. He begins, as usual, in the Jews' synagogue, and makes the first offer of the gospel to them, that he might gather in the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, who were now scattered upon the mountains. Observe,

1. Where he preached to them: in their synagogue (v. 8), as Christ used to do. He went and joined with them in their synagogue-worship, to take off their prejudices against him, and to ingratiate himself with them, while there was any hope of winning upon them. Thus he would bear his testimony to public worship on sabbath days. Where there were no Christian assemblies yet formed, he frequented the Jewish assemblies, while the Jews were not as yet wholly cast off. Paul went into the synagogue, because there he had them together, and had them, it might be hoped, in a good frame.

2. What he preached to them: *The things concerning the kingdom of God* among men, the great things which concerned God's dominion over all men and favour to them, and men's subjection to God and happiness in God. He showed them their obligations to God and interest in him, as the Creator, by which the kingdom of God was set up,—the violation of those obligations, and the forfeiture of that interest, by sin, by which the kingdom of God was pulled down,—and the renewing of those obligations and the restoration of man to that interest again, by the Redeemer, whereby the kingdom of God was again set up. Or, more particularly, *the things concerning the kingdom of the Messiah*, which the Jews were in expectation of, and promised themselves great matters from; he opened the scriptures which spoke concerning this, gave them a right notion of this kingdom, and showed them their mistakes about it.

3. How he preached to them. (1.) He preached argumentatively: he disputed; gave reasons, scripture-reasons, for what he preached, and answered objections, for the convincing of men's judgments and consciences, that they might not only believe, but might see cause to believe. He preached *διαλεγόμενος*—*dialogue-wise*; he put questions to them and received their answers, gave them leave to put questions to him and answered them. (2.) He preached affectionately: he persuaded; he used not only logical arguments, to enforce what he said upon their understandings, but rhetorical motives, to impress what he said upon their affections, showing them that the things he preached concerning the kingdom of God were things concerning themselves, which they were nearly concerned in, and therefore ought to concern themselves about, 2 Cor. v. 11, *We persuade men*. Paul was a moving preacher, and was master of the art of persuasion. (3.) He preached undauntedly, and with a holy resolution: he spoke boldly, as one that had not the least doubt of the things he spoke of, nor the least distrust of him he spoke from, nor the least dread of those he spoke to.

4. How long he preached to them: *For the space of three months*, which was a competent time allowed them to consider of it; in that time those among them that belonged to the election of grace were called in, and the rest were left inexcusable. Thus long Paul preached the gospel *with much contention* (1 Thess. ii. 2), yet he *did not fail, nor was discouraged*.

5. What success his preaching had among them. (1.) There were some that were persuaded to believe in Christ; some think this is intimated in the word *persuading*—he prevailed with them. But, (2.) Many continued in their infidelity, and were confirmed in their prejudices against Christianity. When Paul called on them before, and preached only some general things to them, they courted his stay among them (*ch. xvi. 20*); but now that he settled among them, and his word came more closely to their consciences, they were soon weary of him. [1.] They had an invincible aversion to the gospel of Christ themselves: they were *hardened, and believed not*; they were resolved they would not believe, though the truth shone in their faces with ever such a convincing light and evidence. Therefore they believed not, because they were hardened. [2.] They did their utmost to raise and keep up in others an aversion to the gospel; they not only entered not into the kingdom of God themselves, but neither did they suffer those that were entering to go in; for *they spoke evil of that way before the multitude*, to prejudice them against it. Though they could not show any manner of evil in it, yet they said all manner of evil concerning it. These sinners, like the angels that sinned, be-

came Satans, adversaries and devils, false accusers.

II. When he had carried the matter as far as it would go in the synagogue of the Jews, and found that their opposition grew more obstinate, he left the synagogue, because he could not safely, or rather because he could not comfortably and successfully, continue in communion with them. Though their worship was such as he could join in, and they had not silenced him, nor forbidden him to preach among them, yet they drove him from them by their railing at those things which he spoke *concerning the kingdom of God*: they hated to be reformed, hated to be instructed, and therefore *he departed from them*. Here we are sure there was a separation and no schism; for there was a just cause for it and a clear call to it. Now observe,

1. When Paul departed from the Jews he took the disciples with him, and *separated them, to save them from that untoward generation* (according to the charge Peter gave to his new converts, *ch. ii. 40*); lest they should be infected with the poisonous tongues of those blasphemers, he separated those who believed, to be the foundation of a Christian church, now that they were a competent number to be incorporated, that others might attend with them upon the preaching of the gospel, and might, upon their believing, be added to them. When Paul departed there needed no more to separate the disciples; let him go where he will, they will follow him.

2. When Paul separated from the synagogue he set up a meeting of his own, he *disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus*. He left the synagogue of the Jews, that he might go on with the more freedom in his work; still he disputed for Christ and Christianity, and was ready to answer all opponents whatsoever in defence of them; and he had by this separation a double advantage. (1.) That now his opportunities were more frequent. In the synagogue he could only preach every sabbath day (*ch. xiii. 42*), but now he disputed daily, he set up a lecture every day, and thus redeemed time: those whose business would not permit them to come one day might come another day; and those were welcome who *watched daily at these gates of wisdom, and waited daily at the posts of her doors*. (2.) That now they were more open. To the synagogue of the Jews none might come, nor could come, but Jews or proselytes; Gentiles were excluded; but, when he set up a meeting in the school of Tyrannus, both Jews and Greeks attended his ministry, *v. 10*. Thus, as he describes this gate of opportunity at Ephesus (1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9), *a wide door and an effectual was opened to him, though there were many adversaries*. Some think this school of Tyrannus was a divinity-school of the Jews, and such a one they commonly had in their great cities besides their synagogue; they

called it *Bethmidrash, the house of enquiry, or of repetition*; and they went to that on the sabbath day, after they had been in the synagogue. They go *from strength to strength, from the house of the sanctuary to the house of doctrine*. If this was such a school, it shows that though Paul left the synagogue he left it gradually, and still kept as near it as he could, as he had done, *ch. xviii. 7*. But others think it was a philosophy-school of the Gentiles, belonging to one Tyrannus, or a retiring place (for so the word *σχολή* sometimes signifies) belonging to a principal man or governor of the city; some convenient place it was, which Paul and the disciples had the use of, either for love or money.

3. Here he continued his labours for *two years*, read his lectures and disputed daily. These two years commence from the end of the *three months* which he spent in the synagogue (*v. 8*); after they were ended, he continued for some time in the country about, preaching; therefore he might justly reckon it in all three years, as he does, *ch. xx. 31*.

4. The gospel hereby spread far and near (*v. 10*): *All those that dwell in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus*; not only all that dwelt in Ephesus, but all that dwelt in that large province called *Asia*, of which Ephesus was the head city—*Asia the Less* it was called. There was great resort to Ephesus from all parts of the country, for law, traffic, religion, and education, which gave Paul an opportunity of sending the report of the gospel to all the towns and villages of that country. They all heard *the word of the Lord Jesus*. The gospel is Christ's word, it is a word concerning Christ. This they heard, or at least heard of it. Some of all sects, some out of all parts both in city and country, embraced this gospel, and entertained it, and by them it was communicated to others; and so they all *heard the word of the Lord Jesus*, or might have heard it. Probably Paul sometimes made excursions himself into the country, to preach the gospel, or sent his missionaries or assistants that attended him, and thus the word of the Lord was *heard throughout that region*. Now *those that sat in darkness saw a great light*.

III. God confirmed Paul's doctrine by miracles, which awakened people's enquiries after it, fixed their affection to it, and engaged their belief of it, *v. 11, 12*. I wonder we have not read of any miracle wrought by Paul since the casting of the evil spirit out of the damsel at Philippi; why did he not work miracles at Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens? Or, if he did, why are they not recorded? Was the success of the gospel, without miracles in the kingdom of nature, itself such a miracle in the kingdom of grace, and the divine power which went along with it such a proof of its divine original, that there needed no other? It is certain that at Corinth he wrought many miracles, though



Luke has recorded none, for he tells them (2 Cor. xii. 12) that the signs of his apostleship were among them, *in wonders and mighty deeds*. But here at Ephesus we have a general account of the proofs of this kind which he gave of his divine mission. 1. They were *special miracles*—*Δυνάμεις ὡς τυχοῦσας*. God exerted powers that were not according to the common course of nature: *Virtutes non vulgares*. Things were done which could by no means be ascribed either to chance or second causes. Or, they were not only (as all miracles are) *out of the common road*, but they were even uncommon miracles, such miracles as had not been wrought by the hands of any other of the apostles. The opposers of the gospel were so prejudiced that any miracles would not serve their turn; therefore God wrought *virtutes non quasilibet* (so they render it), *something above the common road of miracles*. 2. It was not Paul that wrought them (*What is Paul, and what is Apollos?*) but it was God that wrought them *by the hand of Paul*. He was but the instrument, God was the principal agent.

3. He not only cured the sick that were brought to him, or to whom he was brought, but *from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs or aprons*; they got Paul's handkerchiefs, or his aprons, that is, say some, the aprons he wore when he worked at his trade, and the application of them to the sick cured them immediately. Or, they brought the sick people's handkerchiefs, or their girdles, or caps, or head-dresses, and laid them for awhile to Paul's body, and then took them to the sick. The former is more probable. Now was fulfilled that word of Christ to his disciples, *Greater works than these shall you do*. We read of one that was cured by the touch of Christ's garment when it was upon him, and he perceived that *virtue went out of him*; but here were people cured by Paul's garments when they were taken from him. Christ gave his apostles power *against unclean spirits and against all manner of sickness* (Matt. x. 1), and accordingly we find here that those to whom Paul sent relief had it in both those cases: *for the diseases departed from them and the evil spirits went out of them*, which were both significant of the great design and blessed effect of the gospel, the healing of spiritual disease, and freeing the souls of men from the power and dominion of Satan.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. 14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said,

Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. 19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

The preachers of the gospel were sent forth to carry on a war against Satan, and therein Christ went forth *conquering and to conquer*. The casting of evil spirits out of those that were possessed was one instance of Christ's victory over Satan; but, to show in how many ways Christ triumphed over that great enemy, we have here in these verses two remarkable instances of the conquest of Satan, not only in those that were violently possessed by him, but in those that were voluntarily devoted to him.

I. Here is the confusion of some of Satan's servants, some *vagabond Jews*, that were *exorcists*, who made use of Christ's name profanely and wickedly in their diabolical enchantments, but were made to pay dearly for their presumption. Observe,

1. The general character of those who were guilty of this presumption. They were Jews, but *vagabond Jews*, were of the Jewish nation and religion, but went about from town to town to get money by conjuring. They strolled about to tell people their fortunes, and pretended by spells and charms to cure diseases, and bring people to themselves that were melancholy or distracted. They called themselves exorcists, because in doing their tricks they used forms of adjuration, by such and such commanding names. The superstitious Jews, to put a reputation upon these magic arts, wickedly attributed the invention of them to Solomon. So Josephus (*Antiquit. lib. viii. cap. 2*) says that Solomon composed charms by which diseases were cured, and devils driven out so as never to return; and that these operations continued common among the Jews to his time. And Christ seems to refer to this (Matt. xii. 27), *By whom do your children cast them out?*

2. A particular account of some at Ephesus that led this course of life and came thither

in their travels; they were *seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, v. 14.* It is sad to see the house of Jacob thus degenerated, much more the house of Aaron, the family that was in a peculiar manner consecrated to God; it is truly sad to see any of that race in league with Satan. Their father was a chief of the priests, head of one of the twenty-four courses of priests. One would think the temple would find both employment and encouragement enough for the sons of a chief priest, if they had been twice as many. But probably it was a vain, rambling, rakish humour that led them to turn mountebanks, and wander all the world over to cure mad folks.

3. The profaneness they were guilty of: *They took upon them to call over evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus*; not as those who had a veneration for Christ and a confidence in his name, as we read of some who cast out devils in Christ's name and yet did not follow with his disciples (Luke ix. 49), whom he would not have to be discouraged; but as those who were willing to try all methods to carry on their wicked trade, and, it should seem, had this design:—If the evil spirits should yield to an adjuration in the name of Jesus by those that did not believe in him, they would say it was no confirmation of his doctrine to those that did; for it was all one whether they believed it or no. If they should not yield to it, they would say the name of Christ was not so powerful as the other names they used, to which the devils had often by collusion yielded. They said, *We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches*; not, “whom we believe in, or depend upon, or have any authority from,” but *whom Paul preaches*; as if they had said, “We will try what that name will do.” The exorcists in the Romish church, who pretend to cast the devil out of melancholy people by spells and charms which they understand not, and which, not having any divine warrant, cannot be used in faith, are the followers of these vagabond Jews.

4. The confusion they were put to in their impious operations. Let them not be deceived, God is not mocked, nor shall the glorious name of Jesus be prostituted to such a vile purpose as this; *what communion hath Christ with Belial?* (1.) The evil spirit gave them a sharp reply (v. 15): “*Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?*” I know that Jesus has conquered principalities and powers, and that Paul has authority in his name to cast out devils; but what power have you to command us in his name, or who gave you any such power? What have you to do to declare the power of Jesus, or to take his covenant and commands into your mouths, seeing you hate his instructions?” Ps. l. 16, 17. This was extorted out of the mouth of the evil spirit by the power of God, to gain honour to the gospel, and to put those to shame that made a bad use of Christ's name.

Antichristian powers and factions pretend a mighty zeal for Jesus and Paul, and to have authority from them; but, when the matter comes to be looked into, it is a mere worldly secular interest that is to be thus supported; nay, it is an enmity to true religion: *Jesus we know, and Paul we know; but who are you?* (2.) *The man in whom the evil spirit was* gave them a warm reception, fell foul upon them, *leaped upon them* in the height of his frenzy and rage, *overcame them* and all their enchantments, *prevailed against them*, and was every way too hard for them; so that *they fled out of the house, not only naked, but wounded*; their clothes pulled off their backs, and their heads broken. This is written for a warning to all those who name the name of Christ, but do not depart from iniquity. The same enemy that overcomes them with his temptations will overcome them with his terrors; and their adjuring him in Christ's name to let them alone will be no security to them. If we resist the devil by a true and lively faith in Christ, he will flee from us; but if we think to resist him by the bare using of Christ's name, or any part of his word, as a spell or charm, he will prevail against us.

5. The general notice that was taken of this, and the good impression it made upon many (v. 17): *This was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus.* It was the common talk of the town; and the effect of it was, (1.) That men were terrified: *fear fell on them all.* In this instance they saw the malice of the devil whom they served, and the power of Christ whom they opposed; and both were awful considerations. They saw that the name of Christ was not to be trifled with, nor his religion compounded with the pagan superstitions. (2.) That God was glorified; *the name of the Lord Jesus*, by which his faithful servants cast out devils and cured diseases, without any resistance, *was the more magnified*; for now it appeared to be a name above every name.

II. Here is the conversion of others of Satan's servants, with the evidences of their conversion.

1. Those that had been guilty of wicked practices confessed them, v. 18. Many that had believed and were baptized, but had not then been so particular as they might have been in the confession of their sins, were so terrified with these instances of the magnifying of the name of Jesus Christ that they came to Paul, or some of the other ministers that were with him, and confessed what evil lives they had led, and what a great deal of secret wickedness their own consciences charged them with, which the world knew not of—secret frauds and secret filthiness; *they showed their deeds*, took shame to themselves and gave glory to God and warning to others. These confessions were not extorted from them, but were voluntary, for the ease of their consciences, upon which the late mi-



racles had struck a terror. Note, Where there is true contrition for sin there will be an ingenuous confession of sin to God in every prayer, and to man whom we have offended when the case requires it.

2. Those that had conversed with wicked books burnt them (v. 19): *Many also of those who used curious arts, τὰ περὶ πύρα—impertinent things; multa nihil ad se pertinentia sagittantes—busy bodies* (so the word is used, 2 Thess. iii. 11; 1 Tim. v. 13), that traded in the study of magic and divination, in books of judicial astrology, casting nativities, telling fortunes, raising and laying spirits, interpreting dreams, predicting future events, and the like, to which some think are to be added *plays, romances, love-books, and unchaste and immodest poems—histrionica, amatoria, saltatoria*.—Stres. These, having their consciences more awakened than ever to see the evil of those practices in which these books instructed them, *brought their books together, and burnt them before all men*. Ephesus was notorious for the use of these curious arts; hence spells and charms were called *Literæ Ephesiæ*. Here people furnished themselves with all those sorts of books, and, probably, had tutors to instruct them in those *black arts*. It was therefore much for the honour of Christ and his gospel to have such a noble testimony borne against those *curious arts*, in a place where they were so much in vogue. It is taken for granted that they were convinced of the evil of these curious arts, and resolved to deal in them no longer; but they did not think this enough unless they burnt their books. (1.) Thus they showed a holy indignation at the sins they had been guilty of; as the idolaters, when they were brought to repentance, said to their idols, *Get you hence* (Isa. xxx. 22), and cast even those of silver and gold *to the moles and to the bats*, Isa. ii. 20. They thus took a pious revenge on those things that had been the instruments of sin to them, and proclaimed the force of their convictions of the evil of it, and that those very things were now detestable to them, as much as ever they had been delectable. (2.) Thus they showed their resolution never to return to the use of those arts, and the books which related to them, again. They were so fully convinced of the evil and danger of them that they would not throw the books by, within reach of a recal, upon supposition that it was possible they might change their mind; but, being stedfastly resolved never to make use of them, they burnt them. (3.) Thus they put away a temptation to return to them again. Had they kept the books by them, there was danger lest, when the heat of the present conviction was over, they should have the curiosity to look into them, and so be in danger of liking them and loving them again, and therefore they burnt them. Note, Those that truly repent of sin will keep themselves as far as possible from the oc-

casions of it. (4.) Thus they prevented their doing mischief to others. If Judas had been by he would have said, "Sell them, and give the money to the poor;" or, "Buy Bibles and good books with it." But then who could tell into whose hands these dangerous books might fall, and what mischief might be done by them? it was therefore the safest course to commit them all to the flames. Those that are recovered from sin themselves will do all they can to keep others from falling into it, and will be much more afraid of laying an occasion of sin in the way of others. (5.) Thus they showed a contempt of the wealth of this world; for the price of the books was cast up, probably by those that persuaded them not to burn them, and it was found to be *fifty thousand pieces of silver*, which some compute to be fifteen hundred pounds of our money. It is probable that the books were scarce, perhaps prohibited, and therefore dear. Probably they had cost them so much; yet, being the devil's books, though they had been so foolish as to buy them, they did not think this would justify them in being so wicked as to sell them again. (6.) Thus they publicly testified their joy for their conversion from these wicked practices, as Matthew did by the great feast he made when Christ had called him from the receipt of custom. These converts joined together in making this bonfire, and made it before all men. They might have burnt the books privately, every one in his own house, but they chose to do it together, by consent, and to do it at the high cross (as we say), that Christ and his grace in them might be the more magnified, and all about them the more edified.

III. Here is a general account of the progress and success of the gospel in and about Ephesus (v. 20): *So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed*. It is a blessed sight to see the word of God growing and prevailing mightily, as it did here. 1. To see it grow extensively, by the addition of many to the church. When still more and more are wrought upon by the gospel, and wrought up into a conformity to it, then it grows; when those that were least likely to yield to it, and that had been most stiff in their opposition to it, are captivated and brought into obedience to it, then it may be said to *grow mightily*. . . 2. To see it prevail extensively, by the advancement in knowledge and grace of those that are added to the church; when strong corruptions are mortified, vicious habits changed, evil customs of long standing broken off, and pleasant, gainful, fashionable sins are abandoned, then it prevails mightily; and Christ in it goes on conquering and to conquer.

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying,

After I have been there, I must also see Rome. 22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. 23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. 24 For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; 25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. 26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: 27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. 28 And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. 29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. 30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. 31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. 32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. 33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. 34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. 35 And when the

town clerk had appeased the people. he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. 37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. 38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. 39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. 40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. 41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

I. Paul is here brought into some trouble at Ephesus, just when he is forecasting to go thence, and to cut out work for himself elsewhere. See here,

1. How he laid his purpose of going to other places, *v.* 21, 22. He was a man of vast designs for God, and was for making his influences as widely diffusive as might be. Having spent above two years at Ephesus, (1.) He designed a visit to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, especially of Philippi and Corinth, the chief cities of those provinces, *v.* 21. There he had planted churches, and now is concerned to visit them. He *purposed in the spirit*, either in his own spirit, not communicating his purpose as yet, but keeping it to himself; or by the direction of the Holy Spirit, who was his guide in all his motions, and by whom he was led. He purposed to go and see how the work of God went on in those places, that he might rectify what was amiss and encourage what was good. (2.) Thence he designed to go to Jerusalem, to visit the brethren there, and give an account to them of the prospering of the good pleasure of the Lord in his hand; and thence he intended to go to Rome, to go and see *Rome*; not as if he designed only the gratifying of his curiosity with the sight of that ancient famous city, but because it was an expression people commonly used, that they would go and see Rome, would look about them there, when that which he designed was to see the Christians there, and to do them some service,



ROM. i. 11. The good people at Rome were the glory of the city which he longed for a sight of. Dr. Lightfoot supposes that it was upon the death of the emperor Claudius, who died the second year of Paul's being at Ephesus, that Paul thought of going to Rome, because while he lived the Jews were forbidden Rome, *ch. xviii. 2.* (3.) He sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, to give them notice of the visit he intended them, and to get their collection ready for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Soon after he wrote *the first epistle to the Corinthians*, designing to follow it himself, as appears 1 Cor. iv. 17, 19, *I have sent to you Timotheus; but I will myself come to you shortly, if the Lord will.* For the present, he staid in Asia, in the country about Ephesus, founding churches.

2. How he was seconded in his purpose, and obliged to pursue it by the troubles which at length he met with at Ephesus. It was strange that he had been quiet there so long; yet it should seem he had met with trouble there not recorded in this story, for in his epistle written at this time he speaks of his having *fought with beasts at Ephesus* (1 Cor. xv. 32), which seems to be meant of his being put to fight with wild beasts in the theatre, according to the barbarous treatment they sometimes gave the Christians. And he speaks of the trouble which came to them in Asia, near Ephesus, when he *despaired of life*, and *received a sentence of death within himself*, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

II. But, in the trouble here related, he was worse frightened than hurt. In general, *there arose no small stir about that way*, v. 23. Some historians say that the famous impostor Apollonius Tyanæus, who set up for a rival with Christ, and gave out himself, as Simon Magus, to be *some great one*, was at Ephesus about this time that Paul was there. But it seems the opposition he gave to the gospel was so insignificant that St. Luke did not think it worth taking notice of. The disturbance he gives an account of was of another nature: let us view the particulars of it. Here is,

1. A great complaint against Paul and the other preachers of the gospel for drawing people off from the worship of Diana, and so spoiling the trade of the silversmiths that worked for Diana's temple.

(1.) The complainant is Demetrius, a silversmith, a principal man, it is likely, of the trade, and one that would be thought to understand and consult the interests of it more than others of the company. Whether he worked in other sorts of plate or no we are not told; but the most advantageous branch of his trade was *making silver shrines for Diana*, v. 24. Some think these were medals stamped with the effigies of Diana, or her temple, or both; others think they were representations of the temple, with the image of Diana in it in miniature, all of silver, but so small that people might carry them about with

them, as the papists do their crucifixes. Those that came from far to pay their devotions at the temple of Ephesus, when they went home bought these little temples or shrines, to carry home with them, for the gratifying of the curiosity of their friends, and to preserve in their own minds the idea of that stately edifice. See how craftsmen, and crafty men too above the rank of silversmiths, make an advantage to themselves of people's superstition, and serve their worldly ends by it.

(2.) The persons he appeals to are not the magistrates, but the mob; he called the *craftsmen* together, *with the workmen of like occupation* (a company of mechanics, who had no sense of any thing but their worldly interest), and these he endeavoured to incense against Paul, who would be actuated as little by reason and as much by fury as he could desire.

(3.) His complaint and representation are very full. [1.] He lays it down for a principle that the art and mystery of making silver shrines for the worshippers of Diana was very necessary to be supported and kept up (v. 25): "*You know that by this craft we have not only our subsistence, and our necessary food, but our wealth.* We grow rich, and raise estates. We live great, and have wherewithal to maintain our pleasures; and therefore, whatever comes of it, we must not suffer this craft to grow into contempt." Note, It is natural for men to be jealous for that, whether right or wrong, by which they get their wealth; and many have, for this reason alone, set themselves against the gospel of Christ, because it calls men off from those crafts which are unlawful, how much wealth soever is to be obtained by them. [2.] He charges it upon Paul that he had dissuaded men from worshipping idols. The words, as they are laid in the indictment, are, that he had asserted, *Those are no gods which are made with hands*, v. 26. Could any truth be more plain and self-evident than this, or any reasoning more cogent and convincing than that of the prophets, *The workman made it, therefore it is not God?* The first and most genuine notion we have of God is, that he has his being of himself, and depends upon none; but that all things have their being from him, and their dependence on him: and then it must follow that those are no gods which are the creatures of men's fancy and the work of men's hands. Yet this must be looked upon as an heretical and atheistical notion, and Paul as a criminal for maintaining it; not that they could advance any thing against this doctrine itself, but that the consequence of it was that not only at Ephesus, the chief city, but almost throughout all Asia, among the country people, who were their best customers, and whom they thought they were surest of, he had *persuaded and turned away much people* from the worship of Diana; so that there was not now such a demand for the silver shrines as had been, nor were such good rates given for them.

There are those who will stickle for that which is most grossly absurd and unreasonable, and which carries along with it its own conviction of falsehood, as this does, *that those are gods which are made with hands*, if it have but human laws, and worldly interest and prescription, on its side. [3.] He reminds them of the danger which their trade was in of going to decay. Whatever touches this touches them in a sensible tender part: "If this doctrine gains credit, we are all undone, and may even shut up shop; *this our craft will be set at nought*, will be convicted, and put into an ill name as superstition, and a cheat upon the world, and every body will run it down. *This our part*" (so the word is), "our interest or share of trade and commerce," *κινδυνεύει ἡμῖν τὸ μέρος*, "will not only come into danger of being lost, but it will bring us into danger, and we shall become not only beggars, but malefactors." [4.] He pretends a mighty zeal for Diana, and a jealousy for her honour: *Not only this our craft is in danger*; if that were all, he would not have you think that he would have spoken with so much warmth, but all his care is lest *the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed*; and he would not, for all the world, see the diminution of the honour of that goddess, *whom all Asia and the world worship*. See what the worship of Diana had to plead for itself, and what was the utmost which the most zealous bigots for it had to say in its behalf. First, That it had pomp on its side; the magnificence of the temple was the thing that charmed them, the thing that chained them; they could not bear the thoughts of any thing that tended to the diminution, much less to the destruction, of that. Secondly, That it had numbers on its side; *All Asia and the world worship it*; and therefore it must needs be the right way of worship, let Paul say what he will to the contrary. Thus, because *all the world wonders after the beast*, therefore *the dragon, the devil, the god of this world, gives him his power, and his seat, and great authority*, Rev. xiii. 2, 3.

2. The popular resentment of this complaint. The charge was managed by a craftsman, and was framed to incense the common people, and it had the desired effect; for on this occasion they showed, (1.) A great displeasure against the gospel and the preachers of it: *They were full of wrath* (v. 28), *full of fury and indignation*, so the word signifies. The craftsmen went stark mad when they were told that their trade and their idol were both in danger. (2.) A great jealousy for the honour of their goddess: *They cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians"*; and we are resolved to stand by her, and live and die in the defence of her. Are there any that expose her to contempt, or threaten her destruction? Let us alone to deal with them. Let Paul say ever so much to prove that those are no gods which are made with hands, we

will abide by it that, whatever becomes of other gods and goddesses, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*. We must and will stand up for the religion of our country, which we have received by tradition from our fathers." Thus all people *walked every one in the name of his god*, and all thought well of their own; much more should the servants of the true God do so, who can say, *This God is our God for ever and ever*. (3.) A great disorder among themselves (v. 29): *The whole city was full of confusion*—the common and natural effect of an intemperate zeal for a false religion; it throws all into confusion, dethrones reason, and enthrones passion; and men run together, not only not knowing one another's minds, but not knowing their own.

3. The proceedings of the mob under the power of these resentments, and how far they were carried.

(1.) They laid hands on some of Paul's companions, and hurried them into the theatre (v. 29), some think with design there to make them *fight with beasts*, as Paul had sometimes done; or perhaps they intended only to abuse them, and to make them a spectacle to the crowd. Those whom they seized were *Gaius and Aristarchus*, of both of whom we read elsewhere. *Gaius was of Derbe*, ch. xx. 4. *Aristarchus* is also there spoken of, and Col. iv. 10. They came with Paul from Macedonia, and this was their only crime, that they were Paul's companions in travel, both in services and sufferings.

(2.) Paul, who had escaped being seized by them, when he perceived his friends in distress for his sake, *would have entered in unto the people*, to sacrifice himself, if there were no other remedy, rather than his friends should suffer upon his account; and it was an evidence of a generous spirit, and that he loved his neighbour as himself.

(3.) He was persuaded from it by the kindness of his friends, who overruled him. [1.] *The disciples suffered him not*, for it better became him to offer it than it would have become them to suffer it. They had reason to say to Paul, as David's servants did to him, when he was for exposing himself in a piece of public service, *Thou art worth ten thousand of us*, 2 Sam. xviii. 3. [2.] Others of his friends interposed, to prevent his throwing himself thus into the mouth of danger. They would treat him much worse than Gaius and Aristarchus, looking upon him as the ringleader of the party; and therefore better let them bear the brunt of the storm than that he should venture into it, v. 31. They were *certain of the chief of Asia, the princes of Asia*—*Ἀσιάρχαι*. The critics tell us they were the chief of their priests; or, as others, the chief of their players. Whether they were converts to the Christian faith (and some such there were even of their priests and governors), or whether they were only well-wishers to Paul, as an ingenuous good man, we are



not told, only that they were *Paul's friends*. Dr. Lightfoot suggests that they kept up a respect and kindness for him ever since he fought with beasts in their theatre, and were afraid he should be abused so again. Note, It is a friendly part to take more care of the lives and comforts of good men than they do themselves. It would be a very hazardous adventure for Paul to go into the theatre; it was a thousand to one that it would cost him his life; and therefore Paul was overruled by his friends to obey the law of self-preservation, and has taught us to keep out of the way of danger as long as we can without going out of the way of duty. We may be called to lay down our lives, but not to throw away our lives. It would better become Paul to venture into a synagogue than into a theatre.

(4.) The mob was in a perfect confusion (v. 32): *Some cried one thing and some another*, according as their fancies and passions, and perhaps the reports they received, led them. Some cried, Down with the Jews; others, Down with Paul; but *the assembly was confused*, as not understanding one another's minds. They contradicted one another, and were ready to fly in one another's faces for it, but they did not understand their own; for the truth was *the greater part knew not wherefore they had come together*. They knew not what began the riot, nor who, much less what business they had there; but, upon such occasions, the greatest part come only to enquire what the matter is: they follow the cry, follow the crowd, increase like a snow-ball, and where there are many there will be more.

(5.) The Jews would have interested themselves in this tumult (in other places they had been the first movers of such riots) but now at Ephesus they had not interest enough to raise the mob, and yet, when it was raised, they had ill-will enough to set in with it (v. 33): *They drew Alexander out of the multitude*, called him out to speak on the behalf of the Jews against Paul and his companions: "You have heard what Demetrius and the silversmiths have to say against them, as enemies to their religion; give us leave now to tell you what we have to say against him as an enemy to our religion." *The Jews put him forward* to do this, encouraged him, and told him they would stand by him and second him; and this they looked upon as necessary in their own defence, and therefore what he designed to say is called his apologizing to the people, not for himself in particular, but for the Jews in general, whom the worshippers of Diana looked upon to be as much their enemies as Paul was. Now they would have them know that they were as much Paul's enemies as they were; and those who are thus careful to distinguish themselves from the servants of Christ now, and are afraid of being taken for them, shall have their doom accordingly

in the great day. *Alexander beckoned with the hand*, desiring to be heard against Paul; for it had been strange if a persecution had been carried on against the Christians and there were not Jews at one end or the other of it: if they could not begin the mischief, they would help it forward, and so make themselves partakers of other men's sins. Some think this Alexander had been a Christian, but had apostatized to Judaism, and therefore was drawn out as a proper person to accuse Paul; and that he was that *Alexander the coppersmith* that did Paul so much evil (2 Tim. iv. 14), and whom he had *delivered unto Satan*. 1 Tim. i. 20.

(6.) This occasioned the prosecutors to drop the prosecution of Paul's friends, and to turn it into acclamations in honour of their goddess (v. 34): *When they knew that he was a Jew*, and, as such, an enemy to the worship of Diana (for the Jews had now an implacable hatred to idols and idolatry), whatever he had to say for Paul or against him, they were resolved not to hear him, and therefore set the mob a shouting, "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians*"; whoever runs her down, be he Jew or Christian, we are resolved to cry her up. *She is Diana of the Ephesians*, our Diana; and it is our honour and happiness to have her temple with us; and she is great, a famous goddess, and universally adored. There are other Dianas, but Diana of the Ephesians is beyond them all, because her temple is more rich and magnificent than any of theirs." This was all the cry for *two hours* together; and it was thought a sufficient confutation of Paul's doctrine, *that those are not gods which are made with hands*. Thus the most sacred truths are often run down with nothing else but noise and clamour and popular fury. It was said of old concerning idolaters that they were *mad upon their idols*; and here is an instance of it. Diana made the Ephesians great, for the town was enriched by the vast concourse of people from all parts to Diana's temple there, and therefore they are concerned by all means possible to keep up her sinking reputation with, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*.

4. The suppressing and dispersing of these rioters, by the prudence and vigilance of the *town-clerk*; he is called, *γραμματεὺς*—the scribe, or secretary, or recorder; "the governor of the city," so some; "the register of their games," the Olympic games (so others), whose business it was to preserve the names of the victors and the prizes they won. With much ado he, at length, stilled the noise, so as to be heard, and then made a pacific speech to them, and gave us an instance of that of Solomon, *The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that rules among fools*, as Demetrius did. Eccl. ix. 17.

(1.) He humours them with an acknowledgment that Diana was the celebrated god-

doss of the Ephesians, v. 35. They needed not to be so loud and strenuous in asserting a truth which nobody denied, or could be ignorant of: Every one knows that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana; is *νεωκόρος* not only that the inhabitants were worshippers of this goddess, but the city, as a corporation, was, by its charter, entrusted with the worship of Diana, to take care of her temple, and to accommodate those who came thither to do her homage. Ephesus is the *æditua* (they say that is the most proper word), or the *sacrist*, of the great goddess Diana. The city was more the patroness and protectress of Diana than Diana was of the city. Such great care did idolaters take for the keeping up of the worship of gods made with hands, while the worship of the true and living God is neglected, and few nations or cities glory in patronizing and protecting that. The temple of Diana at Ephesus was a very rich and sumptuous structure, but, it should seem, the image of Diana in the temple, because they thought it sanctified the temple, was had in greater veneration than the temple, for they persuaded the people that it *fell down from Jupiter*, and therefore was none of the gods that were made with men's hands. See how easily the credulity of superstitious people is imposed upon by the fraud of designing men. Because this image of Diana had been set up time out of mind, and nobody could tell who made it, they made the people believe it fell down from Jupiter. "Now these things," says the town-clerk very gravely (but whether seriously or no, and as one that did himself believe them, may be questioned), "*cannot be spoken against*; they have obtained such universal credit that you need not fear contradiction, it can do you no prejudice." Some take it thus: "Seeing the image of Diana fell down from Jupiter, as we all believe, then what is said against gods made with hands does not at all affect us."

(2.) He cautions them against all violent and tumultuous proceedings, which their religion did not need, nor could receive any real advantage from (v. 36): *You ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly*. A very good rule this is to be observed at all times, both in private and public affairs; not to be hasty and precipitate in our motions, but to deliberate and take time to consider: not to put ourselves or others into a heat, but to be calm and composed, and always keep reason in the throne and passion under check. This word should be ready to us, to command the peace with, when we ourselves or those about us are growing disorderly: *We ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly*; to do nothing in haste, which we may repent of at leisure.

(3.) He wipes off the odium that had been cast upon Paul and his associates, and tells them, they were not the men that they were represented to them to be (v. 37): "*You have brought hither these men*, and are ready to pull

them to pieces; but have you considered what is their transgression and what is their offence? What can you prove upon them? They are not robbers of churches, you cannot charge them with sacrilege, or the taking away of any dedicated thing. They have offered no violence to Diana's temple or the treasures of it; nor are they *blasphemers of your goddess*; they have not given any opprobrious language to the worshippers of Diana, nor spoken scurrilously of her or her temple. Why should you prosecute those *with all this violence* who, though they are not of your mind, yet do not inveigh with any bitterness against you? Since they are calm, why should you be hot?" It was the idol in the heart that they levelled all their force against, by reason and argument; if they can but get that down, the idol in the temple will fall of course. Those that preach against idolatrous churches have truth on their side, and ought vigorously to maintain it and press it on men's consciences; but let them not be robbers of those churches (*on the prey laid they not their hand*, Est. ix. 15, 16), nor blasphemers of those worships; with meekness instructing, not with passion and foul language reproaching, those that oppose themselves; for God's truth, as it needs not man's lie, so it needs not man's intemperate heat. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*.

(4.) He turns them over to the regular methods of the law, which ought always to supersede popular tumults, and in civilized well-governed nations will do so. A great mercy it is to live in a country where provision is made for the keeping of the peace, and the administration of public justice, and the appointing of a remedy for every wrong; and herein we of this nation are as happy as any people. [1.] If the complaint be of a private injury, let them have recourse to the judges and courts of justice, which are kept publicly at stated times. If Demetrius and the company of the silversmiths, that have made all this rout, find themselves aggrieved, or any privilege they are legally entitled to infringed or entrenched upon, let them bring their action, take out a process, and the matter shall be fairly tried, and justice done: *The law is open, and there are deputies*; there is a proconsul and his delegate, whose business it is to hear both sides, and to determine according to equity; and in their determination all parties must acquiesce, and not be their own judges, nor appeal to the people. Note, *The law is good if a man use it lawfully*, as the last remedy both for the discovery of a right disputed and the recovery of a right denied. [2.] If the complaint be of a public grievance, relating to the constitution, it must be redressed, not by a confused rabble, but by a convention of the states (v. 39): *If you enquire any thing concerning other matters, that are of common concern, it shall be determined in a lawful*



assembly of the aldermen and common-council, called together in a regular way by those in authority. Note, Private persons should not intermeddle in public matters, so as to anticipate the counsels of those whose business it is to take cognizance of them; we have enough to do to mind our own business.

(5.) He makes them sensible of the danger they are in, and of the premunire they have run themselves into by this riot (v. 40): "It is well if we be not called in question for this day's uproar, if we be not complained of at the emperor's court, as a factious and seditious city, and if a *quo warranto* be not brought against us and our charter taken away; for *there is no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse*, we have nothing to say in excuse of it. We cannot justify ourselves in breaking the peace by saying that others broke it first, and we only acted defensively; we have no colour for any such plea, and therefore let the matter go no further, for it has gone too far already." Note, Most people stand in awe of men's judgment more than of the judgment of God. How well were it if we would thus still the tumult of our disorderly appetites and passions, and check the violence of them, with the consideration of the account we must shortly give to the Judge of heaven and earth for all these disorders! *We are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar* in our hearts, in our houses; and how shall we answer it, there being no cause, no just cause, or no proportionable one, whereby we may give an account of this concourse, and of this heat and violence? As we must repress the inordinancy of our appetites, so also of our passions, with this, that *for all these things God will bring us into judgment* (Eccl. xi. 9), and we are concerned to manage ourselves as those that must give account.

(6.) When he has thus shown them the absurdity of their riotous meeting, and the bad consequences that might follow from it, he advises them to separate with all speed (v. 41): he *dismissed the assembly*, ordered the crier perhaps to give notice that all manner of persons should peaceably depart and go about their own business, and they did so. See here, [1.] How the overruling providence of God preserves the public peace, by an unaccountable power over the spirits of men. Thus the world is kept in some order, and men are restrained from being as the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the less. Considering what an impetuous furious thing, what an ungovernable untameable wild beast the mob is, when it is up, we shall see reason to acknowledge God's goodness that we are not always under the tyranny of it. *He stills the noise of the sea, the noise of her waves, and* (which is no less an instance of his almighty power) *the tumult of the people*, Ps. lxxv. 7. [2.] See how many ways God has of protecting his

people. Perhaps this town-clerk was no friend at all to Paul, nor to the gospel he preached, yet his human prudence is made to serve the divine purpose. *Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.*

## CHAP. XX.

In this chapter we have, I. Paul's travels up and down about Macedonia, Greece, and Asia, and his coming at length to Troas, ver. 1—6. II. A particular account of his spending one Lord's-day at Troas, and his raising Eutychus to life there, ver. 7—12. III. His progress, or circuit, for the visiting of the churches he had planted, in his way towards Jerusalem, where he designed to be by the next feast of pentecost, ver. 13—16. IV. The farewell sermon he preached to the presbyters at Ephesus, now that he was leaving that country, 17—35. V. The very sorrowful parting between him and them, ver. 36—38. And in all these we find Paul very busy to serve Christ, and to do good to the souls of men, not only in the conversion of heathens, but in the edification of Christians.

AND after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia. 2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, 3 And *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. 4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophymus. 5 These going before tarried for us at Troas. 6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

These travels of Paul which are thus briefly related, if all in them had been recorded that was memorable and worthy to be written in letters of gold, *the world would not contain the books that would have been written*; and therefore we have only some general hints of occurrences, which therefore ought to be the more precious. Here is,

I. Paul's departure from Ephesus. He had tarried there longer than he had done at any one place since he had been ordained to the apostleship of the Gentiles; and now it was time to think of removing, for he must *preach in other cities also*; but after this, to the end of the scripture-history of his life (which is all we can depend upon), we never find him breaking up fresh ground again, nor *preaching the gospel where Christ had not been named*, as hitherto he had done (Rom. xv. 20), for in the close of the next chapter we find him made a prisoner, and so continued, and so left, at the end of this book. 1. Paul left Ephesus soon after the uproar had ceased, looking upon the disturbance he met

with there to be an indication of Providence to him not to stay there any longer, v. 1. His removal might somewhat appease the rage of his adversaries, and gain better quarter for the Christians there. *Currenti cede furori—It is good to lie by in a storm.* Yet some think that before he now left Ephesus he wrote the *first epistle to the Corinthians*, and that his *fighting with beasts at Ephesus*, which he mentions in that epistle, was a figurative description of this uproar; but I rather take that literally. 2. He did not leave them abruptly and in a fright, but took leave of them solemnly: *He called unto him the disciples*, the principal persons of the congregation, *and embraced them, took leave of them* (saith the Syriac) *with the kiss of love*, according to the usage of the primitive church. Loving friends know not how well they love one another till they come to part, and then it appears how near they lay to one another's hearts.

II. His visitation of the Greek churches, which he had planted, and more than once watered, and which appear to have laid very near his heart. 1. He went first to *Macedonia* (v. 1), according to his purpose before the uproar (*ch. xix. 21*); there he visited the churches of Philippi and Thessalonica, and *gave them much exhortation*, v. 2. Paul's visits to his friends were preaching visits, and his preaching was large and copious: *He gave them much exhortation*; he had a great deal to say to them, and did not stint himself in time; he exhorted them to many duties, in many cases, and (as some read it) *with many reasonings*. He enforced his exhortation with a great variety of motives and arguments. 2. He staid *three months in Greece* (v. 2, 3), that is, in *Achaia*, as some think, for thither also he purposed to go, to Corinth, and thereabouts (*ch. xix. 21*), and, no doubt, there also he gave the disciples much exhortation, to direct and confirm them, and engage them to cleave to the Lord.

III. The altering of his measures; for we cannot always stand to our purposes. Accidents unforeseen put us upon new counsels, which oblige us to purpose with a proviso. 1. *Paul was about to sail into Syria, to Antioch*, whence he was first sent out into the service of the Gentiles, and which therefore in his journeys he generally contrived to take in his way; but he changed his mind, and resolved to *return to Macedonia*, the same way he came. 2. The reason was because the Jews, expecting he would steer that course as usual, had way-laid him, designing to be the death of him; since they could not get him out of the way by stirring up both mobs and magistrates against him, which they had often attempted, they contrived to assassinate him. Some think they *laid wait for him*, to rob him of the money that he was carrying to Jerusalem for the relief of the poor saints there; but, considering how very spiteful the Jews were against him, I

suppose they thirsted for his blood more than for his money.

IV. His companions in his travels when he went into Asia; they are here named, v. 4. Some of them were ministers, whether they were all so or no is not certain. *Sopater of Berea*, it is likely, is the same with *Sossipater*, who is mentioned Rom. xvi. 21. *Timothy* is reckoned among them, for though Paul, when he departed from Ephesus (v. 1), left Timothy there, and afterwards wrote his first epistle to him thither, to direct him as an evangelist how to settle the church there, and in what hands to leave it (see 1 Tim. i. 3; iii. 14, 15), which epistle was intended for direction to Timothy what to do, not only at Ephesus where he now was, but also at other places where he should be in like manner left, or whither he should be sent to reside as an evangelist (and not to him only, but to the other evangelists that attended Paul, and were in like manner employed); yet he soon followed him, and accompanied him, with others here named. Now, one would think, this was no good husbandry, to have all these worthy men accompanying Paul, for there was more need of them where Paul was not than where he was; but so it was ordered, 1. That they might assist him in instructing such as by his preaching were awakened and startled; wherever Paul came, the waters were stirred, and then there was need of many hands to help the cripples in. It was time to strike when the iron was hot. 2. That they might be trained up by him, and fitted for future service, *might fully know his doctrine and manner of life*, 2 Tim. iii. 10. Paul's bodily presence was weak and despicable, and therefore these friends of his accompanied him, to put a reputation upon him, to keep him in countenance, and to intimate to strangers, who would be apt to judge by the sight of the eye, that he had a great deal in him truly valuable, which was not discovered upon the outward appearance.

V. His coming to Troas, where he had appointed a general rendezvous of his friends. 1. They went before, and staid for him at Troas (v. 5), designing to go along with him to Jerusalem, as Trophimus particularly did, *ch. xxi. 29*. We should not think it hard to stay awhile for good company in a journey. 2. Paul made the best of his way thither; and, it should seem, Luke was now in company with him; for he says, *We sailed from Philippi* (v. 6), and the first time we find him in his company was here at Troas, *ch. xvi. 11*. *The days of unleavened bread* are mentioned only to describe the time, not to intimate that Paul kept the passover after the manner of the Jews; for just about this time he had written in his first epistle to the church at Corinth, and taught, that Christ is our Passover, and a Christian life our feast of unleavened bread (1 Cor. v. 7, 8), and when the substance was come the shadow was done



away. He came to them to Troas, by sea, in five days, and when he was there staid but seven days. There is no remedy, but a great deal of time will unavoidably be lost in travelling to and fro, by those who go about doing good, yet it shall not be put upon the score of lost time. Paul thought it worth while to bestow five days in going to Troas, though it was but for an opportunity of seven days' stay there; but he knew, and so should we, how to redeem even journeying time, and make it turn to some good account.

7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. 9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. 11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

We have here an account of what passed at Troas the last of the seven days that Paul staid there.

I. There was a solemn religious assembly of the Christians that were there, according to their constant custom, and the custom of all the churches. 1. *The disciples came together*, v. 7. Though they read, and meditated, and prayed, and sung psalms, apart, and thereby kept up their communion with God, yet that was not enough; they must come together to worship God in concert, and so keep up their communion with one another, by mutual countenance and assistance, and testify their spiritual communion with all good Christians. There ought to be stated times for the disciples of Christ to come together; though they cannot all come together in one place, yet as many as can. 2. *They came together upon the first day of the week*, which they called *the Lord's day* (Rev. i. 10), the Christian sabbath, celebrated to the honour of Christ and the Holy Spirit, in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit, both on the first day of the week. This is here said

to be the day when the disciples came together, that is, when it was their practice to come together in all the churches. Note, The first day of the week is to be religiously observed by all the disciples of Christ; and it is a sign between Christ and them, for by this it is known that they are his disciples; and it is to be observed in solemn assemblies, which are, as it were, the courts held in the name of our Lord Jesus, and to his honour, by his ministers, the stewards of his courts, to which all that hold from and under him owe suit and service, and at which they are to make their appearance, as tenants at their Lord's courts, and the first day of the week is appointed to be the court-day. 3. *They were gathered together in an upper chamber* (v. 8); they had no temple nor synagogue to meet in, no capacious stately chapel, but met in a private house, in a garret. As they were few, and did not need, so they were poor, and could not build, a large meeting-place; yet they came together, in that despicable inconvenient place. It will be no excuse for our absenting ourselves from religious assemblies that the place of them is not so decent nor so commodious as we would have it to be. 4. *They came together to break bread*, that is, to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's supper, that one instituted sign of breaking the bread being put for all the rest. *The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ*, 1 Cor. x. 16. In the breaking of the bread, not only the breaking of Christ's body for us, to be a sacrifice for our sins, is commemorated, but the breaking of Christ's body to us, to be food and a feast for our souls, is signified. In the primitive times it was the custom of many churches to receive the Lord's supper every Lord's day, celebrating the memorial of Christ's death in the former, with that of his resurrection in the latter; and both in concert, in a solemn assembly, to testify their joint concurrence in the same faith and worship.

II. In this assembly Paul gave them a sermon, a long sermon, a farewell sermon, v. 7. 1. He gave them a sermon: *he preached to them*. Though they were disciples already, yet it was very necessary they should have the word of God preached to them, in order to their increase in knowledge and grace. Observe, The preaching of the gospel ought to accompany the sacraments. *Moses read the book of the covenant in the audience of the people, and then sprinkled the blood of the covenant, which the Lord had made with them concerning all these words*, Exod. xxiv. 7, 8. What does the seal signify without a writing? 2. It was a farewell sermon, he being ready to depart on the morrow. When he was gone, they might have the same gospel preached, but not as he preached it; and therefore they must make the best use of him that they could while they had him. Farewell sermons are usually in a particular manner affecting both to the preacher and to



the hearers. 3. It was a very long sermon: *He continued his speech until midnight*; for he had a great deal to say, and knew not that ever he should have another opportunity of preaching to them. After they had received the Lord's supper, he preached to them the duties they had thereby engaged themselves to, and the comforts they were interested in, and in this he was very large and full and particular. There may be occasion for ministers to preach, not only *in season, but out of season*. We know some that would have reproached Paul for this as a long-winded preacher, that tired his hearers; but they were willing to hear: he saw them so, and therefore continued his speech. *He continued it till midnight*; perhaps they met in the evening for privacy, or in conformity to the example of the disciples who came together on the first Christian sabbath in the evening. It is probable he had preached to them in the morning, and yet thus lengthened out his evening sermon even till midnight; we wish we had the heads of this long sermon, but we may suppose it was for substance the same with his epistles. The meeting being continued till midnight, there were candles set up, *many lights* (v. 8), that the hearers might turn to the scriptures Paul quoted, and see *whether these things were so*; and that this might prevent the reproach of their enemies, who said they met in the night for works of darkness.

III. *A young man* in the congregation, that slept at sermon, was killed by a fall out of the window, but raised to life again; his name signifies one that had good fortune—*Eutychus, bene fortunatus*; and he answered his name. Observe,

1. The infirmity with which he was overtaken. It is probable his parents brought him, though but a boy, to the assembly, out of a desire to have him well instructed in the things of God by such a preacher as Paul. Parents should bring their children to hear sermons as soon as they can hear with understanding (Neh. viii. 2), even *the little ones*, Deut. xxix. 11. Now this youth was to be blamed, (1.) That he presumptuously sat in the window, unglazed perhaps, and so exposed himself; whereas, if he could have been content to sit on the floor, he had been safe. Boys that love to climb, or otherwise endanger themselves, to the grief of their parents, consider not how much it is also an offence to God. (2.) That he slept, nay, he fell into a deep sleep when Paul was preaching, which was a sign he did not duly attend to the things that Paul spoke of, though they were weighty things. The particular notice taken of his sleeping makes us willing to hope none of the rest slept, though it was sleeping time and after supper; but this youth fell fast asleep, he was *carried away with it* (so the word is), which intimates that he strove against it, but was overpowered by it, and at last sunk down with sleep.

2. The calamity with which he was seized herein: *He fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead*. Some think that the hand of Satan was in it, by the divine permission, and that he designed it for a disturbance to this assembly and a reproach to Paul and it. Others think that God designed it for a warning to all people to take heed of sleeping when they are hearing the word preached; and certainly we are to make this use of it. We must look upon it as an evil thing, as a bad sign of our low esteem of the word of God, and a great hindrance to our profiting by it. We must be afraid of it, do what we can to prevent our being sleepy, not compose ourselves to sleep, but get our hearts affected with the word we hear to such a degree as may drive sleep far enough. Let us *watch and pray, that we enter not into this temptation*, and by it into worse. Let the punishment of Eutychus strike an awe upon us, and show us how jealous God is in the matters of his worship: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*. See how severely God visited an iniquity that seemed little, and but in a youth, and say, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* Apply to this story that lamentation (Jer. ix. 20, 21), *Hear the word of the Lord, for death is come up into our windows, to cut off the children from without and the young men from the streets*.

3. The miraculous mercy shown him in his recovery to life again, v. 10. It gave a present distraction to the assembly, and an interruption to Paul's preaching; but it proved an occasion of that which was a great confirmation to his preaching, and helped to set it home and make it effectual. (1.) *Paul fell on the dead body, and embraced it*, thereby expressing a great compassion to, and an affectionate concern for, this young man, so far was he from saying, "He was well enough served for minding so little what I said!" Such tender spirits as Paul had are much affected with sad accidents of this kind, and are far from judging and censuring those that fall under them, as if those on whom *the tower of Siloam fell were sinners above all that dwelt at Jerusalem*; I tell you, nay. But this was not all; his falling on him and embracing him were in imitation of Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 21), and Elisha (2 Kings iv. 34), in order to the raising of him to life again; not that this could as a means contribute any thing to it, but as a sign it represented the descent of that divine power upon the dead body, for the putting of life into it again, which at the same time he inwardly, earnestly, and in faith prayed for. (2.) He assured them that he had returned to life, and it would appear presently. Various speculations, we may suppose, this ill accident had occasioned in the congregation, but Paul puts an end to them all: "*Trouble not yourselves, be not in any disorder about it, let it not put you into any hurry, for his life is in him*; he is not dead, but sleepeth.



lay him awhile upon a bed, and he will come to himself, for he is now alive." Thus, when Christ raised Lazarus, he said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.* (3.) He returned to his work immediately after this interruption (v. 11): *He came up again to the meeting, they broke bread together in a love-feast, which usually attended the eucharist, in token of their communion with each other, and for the confirmation of friendship among them; and they talked a long while, even till break of day.* Paul did not now go on in a continued discourse, as before, but he and his friends fell into a free conversation, the subject of which, no doubt, was good, and to the use of edifying. Christian conference is an excellent means of promoting holiness, comfort, and Christian love. They knew not when they should have Paul's company again, and therefore made the best use they could of it when they had it, and reckoned a night's sleep well lost for that purpose. (4.) Before they parted *they brought the young man alive into the congregation, every one congratulating him upon his return to life from the dead, and they were not a little comforted, v. 12.* It was matter of great rejoicing among them, not only to the relations of the young man, but to the whole society, as it not only prevented the reproach that would otherwise have been cast upon them, but contributed very much to the credit of the gospel.

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. 14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. 15 And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against Chios; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next *day* we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Paul is hastening towards Jerusalem, but strives to do all the good he can by the way, *ὡς ἐν παρόδῳ*, "as it were by the by." He had called at Troas, and done good there; and now he makes a sort of coasting voyage, the merchants would call it a trading voyage, going from place to place, and no doubt endeavouring to make every place he came to the better for him, as every good man should do.

1. He sent his companions by sea to Assos, but he himself was *minded to go afoot, v. 13.* He had decreed or determined within himself that whatever importunity should be

used with him to the contrary, urging either his ease or his credit, or the convenience of a ship that offered itself, or the company of his friends, he would foot it to Assos: and, if the land-way which Paul took was the shorter way, yet it is taken notice of by the ancients as a rough way (Homer, *Iliad* 6, and Eustathius upon him, say, it was enough to kill one to go on foot to Assos.—*Lorin. in locum*); yet that way Paul would take, 1. That he might call on his friends by the way, and do good among them, either converting sinners or edifying saints; and in both he was serving his great Master, and carrying on his great work. Or, 2. That he might be alone, and might have the greater freedom of converse with God and his own heart in solitude. He loved his companions, and delighted in their company, yet he would show hereby that he did not need it, but could enjoy himself alone. Or, 3. That he might inure himself to hardship, and not seem to indulge his ease. Thus he would by voluntary instances of mortification and self-denial *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection*, that he might make his sufferings for Christ, when he was called out to them, the more easy, 2 Tim. ii. 3. We should use ourselves to deny ourselves.

II. At Assos he went on board with his friends. There they *took him in*; for by this time he had enough of his walk, and was willing to betake himself to the other way of travelling; or perhaps he could not go any further by land, but was obliged to go by water. When Christ sent his disciples away by ship, and tarried behind himself, yet he came to them, and they took him in, Mark vi. 45, 51.

III. He made the best of his way to Jerusalem. His ship passed by *Chios* (v. 15), touched at *Samos* (these are places of note among the Greek writers, both poets and historians); they tarried awhile at *Trogyllium*, the sea-port next to Samos; and the next day they came to *Miletus*, the sea-port that lay next to Ephesus; for (v. 16) he had determined not to go to Ephesus at this time, because he could not go thither without being urged by his friends, whose importunity he could not resist, to make some stay with them there; and, because he was resolved not to stay, he would not put himself into a temptation to stay; *for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem on the day of pentecost.* He had been at Jerusalem about four or five years ago (*ch. xviii. 21, 22*), and now he was going thither again to pay his continued respects to that church, with which he was careful to keep a good correspondence, that he might not be thought alienated from it by his commission to preach among the Gentiles. He aimed to be there by the feast of pentecost because it was a time of course, which would give him an opportunity of propagating the gospel among the Jews and proselytes, who came from all parts to

worship at the feast: and the feast of pentecost had been particularly made famous among the Christians by the pouring out of the Spirit. Note, Men of business must fit themselves, and it will contribute to the expediting of it, to set time (with submission to Providence) and strive to keep it, contriving to do that first which we judge to be most needful, and not suffering ourselves to be diverted from it. It is a pleasure to us to be with our friends; it diverts us, nothing more; but we must not by it be diverted from our work. When Paul has a call to Jerusalem, he will not loiter away the time in Asia, though he had more and kinder friends there. This is not the world we are to be together in; we hope to be so in the other world.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. 18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews: 20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and

to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. 32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

It should seem the ship Paul and his companions were embarked in for Jerusalem attended him on purpose, and staid or moved as he pleased; for when he came to Miletus, he went ashore, and tarried there so long as to send for the elders of Ephesus to come to him thither; for if he had gone up to Ephesus, he could never have got away from them. These elders, or presbyters, some think, were those twelve who received the Holy Ghost by Paul's hands, *ch. xix. 6*. But, besides these, it is probable that Timothy had ordained other elders there for the service of that church, and the country about; these Paul sent for, that he might instruct and encourage them to go on in the work to which they had laid their hands. And what instructions he gave to them they would give to the people under their charge.

It is a very pathetic and practical discourse with which Paul here takes leave of these elders, and has in it much of the excellent spirit of this good man.

I. He appeals to them concerning both his life and doctrine, all the time he had been in and about Ephesus (*v. 18*): "*You know after what manner I have been with you, and how I have done the work of an apostle among you.*" He mentions this as a confirmation of his commission and consequently of the doctrine he had preached



among them. They all knew him to be a man of a serious, gracious, heavenly spirit, that he was no designing self-seeking man, as seducers are; he could not have been carried on with so much evenness and constancy in his services and sufferings, but by the power of divine grace. The temper of his mind, and the tenour both of his preaching and conversation, were such as plainly proved that God was with him of a truth, and that he was actuated and animated by a better spirit than his own.—He likewise makes this reference to his own conduct as an instruction to them, in whose hands the work was now left, to follow his example: "*You know after what manner I have been with you, how I have conducted myself as a minister; in like manner be you with those that are committed to your charge when I am gone (Phil. iv. 9), what you have seen in me that is good do.*"

1. His spirit and conversation were excellent and exemplary; they knew after what manner he had been among them, and how he had had his conversation towards them, in simplicity and godly sincerity (2 Cor. i. 12), how holily, justly, and unblamably he behaved himself, and how gentle he was towards them, 1 Thess. ii. 7, 10. (1.) He had conducted himself well all along, *from the very first day that he came into Asia*—at all seasons; the manner of his entering in among them was such as nobody could find fault with. He appeared from the first day they knew him to be a man that aimed not only to do well, but to do good, wherever he came. He was a man that was consistent with himself, and all of a piece; take him where you would he was the same at all seasons, he did not turn with the wind nor change with the weather, but was uniform like a die, which, throw it which way you will, lights on a square side. (2.) He had made it his business to serve the Lord, to promote the honour of God and the interest of Christ and his kingdom among them. He never served himself, nor made himself a servant of men, of their lusts and humours, nor was he a time-server; but he made it his business to serve the Lord. In his ministry, in his whole conversation, he proved himself what he wrote himself, Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, Rom. i. 1. (3.) He had done his work with all humility of mind—*μετὰ πρῶτης ταπεινότητος*, that is, in all works of condescension, modesty, and self-abasement. Though he was one that God had put a great deal of honour upon, and done a great deal of good by, yet he never took state upon him, nor kept people at a distance, but conversed as freely and familiarly with the meanest, for their good, as if he had stood upon a level with them. He was willing to stoop to any service, and to make himself and his labours as cheap as they could desire. Note, Those that would in any office serve the Lord acceptably to him, and profitably to others, must do it with all humility of mind, Matt. xx.

26, 27. (4.) He had always been very tender, affectionate, and compassionate, among them: he had *served the Lord with many tears*. Paul was herein like his Master, often in tears in his praying, he *wept and made supplication*, Hos. xii. 5. In his preaching, what he had told them before he told them again, *even weeping*, Phil. iii. 18. In his concern for them, though his acquaintance with them was but of a late standing, yet so near did they lie to his heart that he *wept with those that wept*, and mingled his tears with theirs upon every occasion, which was very endearing. (5.) He had struggled with many difficulties among them. He went on in his work in the face of much opposition, *many temptations*, trials of his patience and courage, such discouragements as perhaps were sometimes *temptations* to him, as to Jeremiah in a like case to say, *I will not speak any more in the name of the Lord*, Jer. xx. 8, 9. These befel him *by the lying in wait of the Jews*, who still were plotting some mischief or other against him. Note, Those are the faithful servants of the Lord that continue to serve him in the midst of troubles and perils, that care not what enemies they make, so that they can but approve themselves to their Master, and make him their friend. Paul's tears were owing to his temptations; his afflictions helped to excite his good affections.

2. His preaching was likewise such as it should be, v. 20, 21. He came to Ephesus to preach the gospel of Christ among them, and he had been faithful both to them and to him that appointed him. (1.) He was a plain preacher, and one that delivered his message so as to be understood. This is intimated in two words, *I have shown you, and have taught you*. He did not amuse them with nice speculations, nor lead them into, and then lose them in, the clouds of lofty notions and expressions; but he showed them the plain truths of the gospel, which were of the greatest consequence and importance, and taught them as children are taught. "I have shown you the right way to happiness, and taught you to go in it." (2.) He was a powerful preacher, which is intimated in his *testifying* to them; he preached as one upon oath, that was himself fully assured of the truth of what he preached and was desirous to convince them of it and to influence and govern them by it. He preached the gospel, not as a hawk proclaims news in the street (it is all one to him whether it be true or false), but as a conscientious witness gives in his evidence at the bar, with the utmost seriousness and concern. Paul preached the gospel as a testimony to them if they received it, but as a testimony against them if they rejected it. (3.) He was a profitable preacher, one that in all his preaching aimed at doing good to those he preached to; he studied that which was *profitable unto them*, which had a tendency to make them wise and good, wiser and better, to inform their



judgments and reform their hearts and lives.

He preached τὰ συμβήροντα, such things as brought with them divine light, and heat, and power to their souls. It is not enough not to preach that which is hurtful, which leads into error or hardens in sin, but we must preach that which is profitable. *We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.* Paul aimed to preach not that which was pleasing, but that which was profitable, and to please only in order to profit. God is said to teach his people to profit, Isa. xlviii. 17. Those teach for God that teach people to profit.

4.) He was a painstaking preacher, very industrious and indefatigable in his work; he preached publicly, and from house to house. He did not confine himself to a corner when he had opportunity of preaching in the great congregation; nor did he confine himself to the congregation when there was occasion for private and personal instruction. He was neither afraid nor ashamed to preach the gospel publicly, nor did he grudge to bestow his pains privately, among a few, when there was occasion for it. He preached publicly to the flock that came together into the green pastures, and went from house to house to seek those that were weak and had wandered, and did not think that the one would excuse him from the other. Ministers should in their private visits, and as they go from house to house, discourse of those things which they have taught publicly, repeat them, inculcate them, and explain them, if it be needful, asking, *Have you understood all these things?* And, especially, they should help persons to apply the truth to themselves and their own case. (5.) He was a faithful preacher. He not only preached that which was profitable, but he preached every thing that he thought might be profitable, and kept back nothing, though the preaching of it might either cost him more pains or be disobliging to some and expose him to their ill-will. He declined not preaching whatever he thought might be profitable, though it was not fashionable, nor to some acceptable. He did not keep back reproofs, when they were necessary and would be profitable, for fear of offending; nor did he keep back the preaching of the cross, though he knew it was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, as the Roman missionaries in China lately did. (6.) He was a catholic preacher. *He testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks.* Though he was born and bred a Jew, and had an entire affection for that nation, and was trained up in their prejudices against the Gentiles, yet he did not therefore confine himself to the Jews and avoid the Gentiles; but preached as readily to them as to the Jews, and conversed as freely with them. And, on the other hand, though he was called to be the apostle of the Gentiles, and the Jews had an implacable enmity against him upon that score, had done him many an ill turn, and here at Ephesus

were continually plotting against him, yet he did not therefore abandon them as reprobates, but continued to deal with them for their good. Ministers must preach the gospel with impartiality; for they are ministers of Christ for the universal church. (7.) He was a truly Christian evangelical preacher. He did not preach philosophical notions, or matters of doubtful disputation, nor did he preach politics, or intermeddle at all with affairs of state or the civil government; but he preached faith and repentance, the two great gospel graces, the nature and necessity of them; these he urged upon all occasions. [1.] *Repentance towards God;* that those who by sin had gone away from God, and were going further and further from him into a state of endless separation from him, should by true repentance look towards God, turn towards him, move towards him, and hasten to him. He preached repentance as God's great command (ch. xvii. 30), which we must obey—that men should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance (so he explains it, ch. xxvi. 20); and he preached it as Christ's gift, in order to the remission of sins (ch. v. 31), and directed people to look up to him for it. [2.] *Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* We must by repentance look towards God as our end; and by faith towards Christ as our way to God. Sin must by repentance be abandoned and forsaken, and then Christ must by faith be relied on for the pardon of sin. Our repentance towards God is not sufficient, we must have a true faith in Christ as our Redeemer and Saviour, consenting to him as our Lord and our God. For there is no coming to God, as penitent prodigals to a Father, but in the strength and righteousness of Jesus Christ as Mediator.

Such a preacher as this they all knew Paul had been; and, if they will carry on the same work, they must walk in the same spirit, in the same steps.

II. He declares his expectation of sufferings and afflictions in his present journey to Jerusalem, v. 22—24. Let them not think that he quitted Asia now for fear of persecution; no, he was so far from running away like a coward from the post of danger that he was now like a hero hastening to the high places of the field, where the battle was likely to be hottest: *Now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem*, which may be understood either, (1.) Of the certain foresight he had of trouble before him. Though he was not yet bound in body, he was bound in spirit; he was in full expectation of trouble, and made it his daily business to prepare for it. He was bound in spirit, as all good Christians are poor in spirit, endeavouring to accommodate themselves to the will of God if they should be reduced to poverty. Or, (2.) Of the strong impulse he was under from the Spirit of God working upon his spirit to go this journey: *"I go bound in the spirit, that*



is, firmly resolved to proceed, and well assured that it is by a divine direction and influence that I am so, and not from any humour or design of my own. I go led by the Spirit, and bound to follow him wherever he leads me."

1. He does not know particularly the things that shall befall him at Jerusalem. Whence the trouble shall spring, what shall be the occasion of it, what the circumstances and to what degree it shall arise, God had not thought fit to reveal to him. It is good for us to be kept in the dark concerning future events, that we may be always waiting on God and waiting for him. When we go abroad, it should be with this thought, we know not the things that shall befall us, nor what a day, or a night, or an hour, may bring forth; and therefore must refer ourselves to God, let him do with us as seemeth good in his eyes, and study to stand complete in his whole will.

2. Yet he does know in general that there is a storm before him; for the prophets in every city he passed through told him, by the Holy Ghost, that bonds and afflictions awaited him. Besides the common notice given to all Christians and ministers to expect and prepare for sufferings, Paul had particular intimations of an extraordinary trouble, greater and longer than any he had yet met with, that was now before him.

3. He fixes a brave and heroic resolution to go on with his work, notwithstanding. It was a melancholy peal that was rung in his ears in every city, that bonds and afflictions did abide him; it was a hard case for a poor man to labour continually to do good, and to be so ill treated for his pains. Now it is worth while to enquire how he bore it. He was flesh and blood as well as other men; he was so, and yet by the grace of God he was enabled to go on with his work, and to look with a gracious and generous contempt upon all the difficulties and discouragements he met with in it. Let us take it from his own mouth here (v. 24), where he speaks not with obstinacy nor ostentation, but with a holy humble resolution: "*None of these things move me*; all my care is to proceed and to persevere in the way of my duty, and to finish well." Paul is here an example,

(1.) Of holy courage and resolution in our work, notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions we meet with in it; he saw them before him, but he made nothing of them: *None of these things move me*; οὐδένος λόγον ποιῶναι—I make no account of them. He did not lay these things to heart, Christ and heaven lay there. None of these things moved him. [1.] They did not drive him off from his work; he did not tack about, and go back again, when he saw the storm rise, but went on resolutely, preaching there, where he knew how dearly it would cost him. [2.] They did not deprive him of his

comfort, nor make him drive on heavily in his work. In the midst of troubles he was as one unconcerned. In his patience he possessed his soul, and, when he was as sorrowful, yet he was always rejoicing, and in all things more than a conqueror. Those that have their conversation in heaven can look down, not only upon the common troubles of this earth but upon the threatening rage and malice of hell itself, and say that none of these things moved them, as knowing that none of these things can hurt them.

(2.) Of a holy contempt of life, and the continuance and comforts of it: *Neither count I my life dear to myself*. Life is sweet, and is naturally dear to us. *All that a man has will he give for his life*; but all that a man has, and life too, will he give who understands himself aright and his own interest, rather than lose the favour of God and hazard eternal life. Paul was of this mind. Though to an eye of nature life is superlatively valuable, yet to an eye of faith it is comparatively despicable; it is not so dear but it can be cheerfully parted with for Christ. This explains Luke xiv. 26, where we are required to hate our own lives, not in a hasty passion, as Job and Jeremiah, but in a holy submission to the will of God, and a resolution to die for Christ rather than to deny him.

(3.) Of a holy concern to go through with the work of life, which should be much more our care than to secure either the outward comforts of it or the countenance of it. Blessed Paul counts not his life dear in comparison with this, and resolves in the strength of Christ, *non propter vitam vivendi perdere causas—that he never will, to save his life, lose the ends of living*. He is willing to spend his life in labour, to hazard his life in dangerous services, to waste it in toilsome services; nay, to lay down his life in martyrdom, so that he may but answer the great intentions of his birth, of his baptism, and of his ordination to the apostleship. Two things this great and good man is in care about, and if he gain them it is no matter to him what becomes of life:—[1.] That he may be found faithful to the trust reposed in him, that he may finish the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus, may do the work which he was sent into the world about, or, rather, which he was sent into the church about,—that he may complete the service of his generation, may make full proof of his ministry,—that he may go through the business of it, and others may reap the advantage of it, to the utmost of what was designed,—that he may, as is said of the two witnesses, finish his testimony (Rev. xi. 7), and may not do his work by halves. Observe, *First*, The apostleship was a ministry both to Christ and to the souls of men; and those that were called to it considered more the ministry of it than the dignity or dominion of it; and, if the apostles did so, much more ought the pastors and teachers to do so, and to be in the church

as those that serve. *Secondly*, This ministry was received from the Lord Jesus. He entrusted them with it, and from him they received their charge; for him they do their work, in his name, in his strength; and to him they must give up their account. It was Christ that put them into the ministry (1 Tim. i. 12); it is he that carries them on in their ministry, and from him they have strength to do their service and bear up under the hardships of it. *Thirdly*, The work of this ministry was to *testify the gospel of the grace of God*, to publish it to the world, to prove it, and to recommend it; and, being the gospel of the grace of God, it has enough in it to recommend itself. It is a proof of God's good-will to us, and a means of his good work in us; it shows him gracious towards us, and tends to make us gracious, and so is the gospel of the grace of God. Paul made it the business of his life to testify this, and desired not to live a day longer than he might be instrumental to spread the knowledge and savour and power of this gospel. [2.] That he may finish well. He cares not when the period of his life comes, nor how, be it ever so soon, ever so sudden, ever so sad, as to outward circumstances, so that he may but *finish his course with joy*. *First*, He looks upon his life as a course, a race, so the word is. Our life is a race set before us, Heb. xii. 1. This intimates that we have our labours appointed us, for we were not sent into the world to be idle; and our limits appointed us, for we were not sent into the world to be here always, but to pass through the world, nay, to run through it, and it is soon run through; I may add, to run the gauntlet through it. *Secondly*, He counts upon the finishing of his course, and speaks of it as sure and near, and that which he had his thoughts continually upon. Dying is the end of our race, when we come off either with honour or shame. *Thirdly*, He is full of care to finish it well, which implies a holy desire of obtaining and a holy fear of coming short. "Oh! that I may but finish my course with joy; and then all will be well, perfectly and eternally well." *Fourthly*, He thinks nothing too much to do, nor too hard to suffer, so that he may but finish well, finish with joy. We must look upon it as the business of our life to provide for a joyful death, that we may not only die safely, but die comfortably.

III. Counting upon it that this was the last time they should see him, he appeals to their consciences concerning his integrity, and demands of them a testimony to it.

1. He tells them that he was now taking his last leave of them (v. 25): *I know that you all, among whom I have been conversant preaching the kingdom of God*, though you may have letters from me, shall never see my face again. When any of us part with our friends, we may say, and should say, "We know not that ever we shall see one another

again: our friends may be removed, or we ourselves may." But Paul here speaks it with assurance, by the Spirit of prophecy, that these Ephesians should *see his face no more*; and we cannot think that he who spoke so doubtfully of that which he was not sure of (*not knowing the things that shall befall me there*, v. 22) would speak this with so much confidence, especially when he foresaw what a trouble it would be to his friends here, unless he had had a special warrant from the Spirit to say it, to whom I think those do wrong who suppose that, notwithstanding this, Paul did afterwards come to Ephesus, and see them again. He would never have said thus solemnly, *Now, behold, I know it*, if he had not known it *for certain*. Not but that he foresaw that he had a great deal of time and work yet before him, but he foresaw that his work would be cut out for him in other places, and in these parts he had no more to do. Here he had for a great while gone about preaching the kingdom of God, preaching down the kingdom of sin and Satan, and preaching up the authority and dominion of God in Christ, preaching the kingdom of glory as the end and the kingdom of grace as the way. Many a time they had been glad to see his face in the pulpit, and saw it as it had been the face of an angel. If the feet of these messengers of peace were beautiful upon the mountains, what were their faces? But now they shall see his face no more. Note, We ought often to think of it, that those who now are preaching to us the kingdom of God will shortly be removed and we shall see their faces no more: *the prophets, do they live for ever?* Yet a little while is their light with us; it concerns us therefore to improve it while we have it, that when we shall see their faces no more on earth, yet we may hope to look them in the face with comfort in the great day.

2. He appeals to them concerning the faithful discharge of his ministry among them (v. 26): "*Wherefore*, seeing my ministry is at an end with you, it concerns both you and me to reflect, and look back;" and, (1.) He challenges them to prove him unfaithful, or to have said or done any thing by which he had made himself accessory to the ruin of any precious soul: *I am pure from the blood of all men*, the blood of souls. This plainly refers to that of the prophet (Ezek. xxxiii. 6), where the blood of him that perishes by the sword of the enemy is said to be required at the hand of the unfaithful watchman that did not give warning: "You cannot say but I have given warning, and therefore no man's blood can be laid at my door." If a minister has approved himself faithful, he may have this rejoicing in himself, *I am pure from the blood of all men*, and ought to have this testimony from others. (2.) He therefore leaves the blood of those that perish upon their own heads, because they had fair warning given them, but they would not take



it. (3.) He charges these ministers to look to it that they took care and pains, as he had done: "*I am pure from the blood of all men, see that you keep yourselves so too. I take you to record this day*"—*ἐν τῇ σήμερον ἡμέρᾳ, "I call this day to witness to you:"* so Stresse. As sometimes the heaven and earth are appealed to, so here this day shall be a witness, this parting day.

3. He proves his own fidelity with this (v. 27): *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* (1.) He had preached to them nothing but the counsel of God, and had not added any inventions of his own; "it was pure gospel, and nothing else, the will of God concerning your salvation." The gospel is the counsel of God; it is admirably contrived by his wisdom, it is unalterably determined by his will, and it is kindly designed by his grace for our glory, 1 Cor. ii. 7. This counsel of God it is the business of ministers to declare as it is revealed, and not otherwise nor any further. (2.) He had preached to them the whole counsel of God. As he had preached to them the gospel pure, so he had preached it to them entire; he had gone over a body of divinity among them, that, having the truths of the gospel opened to them methodically from first to last in order, they might the better understand them, by seeing them in their several connections with, and dependences upon, one another. (3.) He had not shunned to do it; had not wilfully nor designedly avoided the declaring of any part of the counsel of God. He had not, to save his own pains, declined preaching upon the most difficult parts of the gospel, nor, to save his own credit, declined preaching upon the most plain and easy parts of it; he had not shunned preaching those doctrines which he knew would be provoking to the watchful enemies of Christianity, or displeasing to the careless professors of it, but faithfully took his work before him, whether they would hear or forbear. And thus it was that he kept himself pure from the blood of all men.

IV. He charges them as ministers to be diligent and faithful in their work.

1. He commits the care of the church at Ephesus, that is, the saints, the Christians that were there and thereabouts (Eph. i. 1), to them, who, though doubtless they were so numerous that they could not all meet in one place, but worshipped God in several congregations, under the conduct of several ministers, are yet called here *one flock*, because they not only agreed in one faith, as they did with all Christian churches, but in many instances they kept up communion one with another. To these elders or presbyters the apostle here, upon the actual foresight of his own final leaving them, commits the government of this church, and tells them that not he, but the Holy Ghost, had made them overseers, *ἐπισκότους*—*bishops of the flock*. "You that are presbyters are bishops of the Holy

Ghost's making, that are to take the oversight of this part of the church of God," 1 Pet. v. 1, 2; Tit. i. 5, 7. While Paul was present at Ephesus, he presided in all the affairs of that church, which made the elders loth to part with him; but now this eagle *stirs up the nest, flutters over her young*; now that they begin to be fledged they must learn to fly themselves, and to act without him, for the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. They took not this honour to themselves, nor was it conferred upon them by any prince or potentate, but the Holy Ghost in them qualified them for, and enriched them to, this great undertaking, the *Holy Ghost fell upon them*, ch. xix. 6. The Holy Ghost also directed those that chose, and called, and ordained, them to this work in answer to prayer.

2. He commanded them to mind the work to which they were called. Dignity calls for duty; if the Holy Ghost has made them *overseers of the flock*, that is, shepherds, they must be true to their trust. (1.) They must take heed to themselves in the first place, must have a very jealous eye upon all the motions of their own souls, and upon all they said and did, must walk circumspectly, and know how to behave themselves aright in the house of God, in which they were now advanced to the office of stewards: "You have many eyes upon you, some to take example by you, others to pick quarrels with you, and therefore you ought to *take heed to yourselves*." Those are not likely to be skilful or faithful keepers of the vineyards of others that do not keep their own. (2.) "*Take heed to the flock*, to all the flock, some to one part of it, others to another, according as your call and opportunity are, but see that no part of it be neglected among you." Ministers must not only take heed to their own souls, but must have a constant regard to the souls of those who are under their charge, as shepherds have to their sheep, that they may receive no damage: "*Take heed to all the flock*, that none of them either of themselves wander from the fold or be seized by the beasts of prey; that none of them be missing, or miscarry, through your neglect." (3.) They must feed the church of God, must do all the parts of the shepherd's office, must lead the sheep of Christ into the green pastures, must lay meat before them, must do what they can to heal those that are distempered and have no appetite to their meat, must feed them with wholesome doctrine, with a tender evangelical discipline, and must see that nothing is wanting that is necessary in order to their being nourished up to eternal life. There is need of pastors, not only to gather the church of God by the bringing in of those that are without, but to *feed* it by building up those that are within. (4.) They must watch (v. 31), as shepherds keep watch over their flocks by night, must be awake and watchful, must not give way to spiritual sloth and slumber, but must stir up them-



selves to their business and closely attend it. *Watch thou in all things* (2 Tim. iv. 5), watch against every thing that will be hurtful to the flock, and watch to every thing that will be advantageous to it; improve every opportunity of doing it a kindness.

3. He gives them several good reasons why they should mind the business of their ministry.

(1.) Let them consider the interest of their Master, and his concern for the flock that was committed to their charge, v. 28. It is *the church which he has purchased with his own blood*. [1.] "It is his own; you are but his servants to take care of it for him. It is your honour that you are employed for God, who will own you in his service; but then your carelessness and treachery are so much the worse if you neglect your work, for you wrong God and are false to him. From him you received the trust, and to him you must give up your account, and therefore take heed to yourselves. And, if it be the church of God, he expects you should show your love to him by feeding his sheep and lambs." [2.] He has purchased it. The world is God's by right of creation, but the church is his by right of redemption, and therefore it ought to be dear to us, for it was dear to him, because it cost him dear, and we cannot better show it than by feeding his sheep and his lambs. [3.] This church of God is what he has purchased; not as Israel of old, when he *gave men for them, and people for their life* (Isa. xliii. 3, 4), but *with his own blood*. This proves that Christ is God, for he is called so here, where yet he is said to purchase the church *with his own blood*; the blood was his as man, yet so close is the union between the divine and human nature that it is here called the blood of God, for it was the blood of him who is God, and his being so put such dignity and worth into it as made it both a valuable ransom of us from evil, and a valuable purchase for us of all good, nay, a purchase of us to Christ, to be to him a peculiar people: *Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me*. In consideration of this, therefore, *feed the church of God*, because it is purchased at so dear a rate. Did Christ lay down his life to purchase it, and shall his ministers be wanting in any care and pains to feed it? Their neglect of its true interest is a contempt of his blood that purchased it.

(2.) Let them consider the danger that the flock was in of being made a prey to its adversaries, v. 29, 30. "If the flock be thus precious upon the account of its relation to God, and its redemption by Christ, then you are concerned to take heed both to yourselves and to it." Here are reasons for both.

[1.] *Take heed to the flock*, for wolves are abroad, that seek to devour (v. 29): *I know this, that after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you*. First, Some understand it of persecutors, that will inform against the Christians, and incense the magistrates against them, and will have no com-

passion on the flock. They thought, because, while Paul was with them, the rage of the Jews was most against him, that, when he had gone out of the country, they would be quiet: "No," says he, "*after my departure* you will find the persecuting spirit still working, therefore take heed to the flock, confirm them in the faith, comfort and encourage them, that they may not either leave Christ for fear of suffering or lose their peace and comfort in their sufferings." Ministers must take a more than ordinary care of the flock in times of persecution. Secondly, It is rather to be understood of seducers and false teachers. Probably Paul has an eye to those of the circumcision, who preached up the ceremonial law; these he calls *grievous wolves*, for though they came in sheep's clothing, nay, in shepherds' clothing, they made mischief in the congregations of Christians, sowed discord among them, drew away many from the pure gospel of Christ, and did all they could to blemish and defame those that adhered to it; not sparing the most valuable members of the flock, stirring up those whom they could influence to bite and devour them (Gal. v. 15); therefore they are called dogs (Phil. iii. 2), as here wolves. While Paul was at Ephesus, they kept away, for they durst not face him; but, when he was gone, then they entered in among them, and sowed their tares where he had sown the good seed. "Therefore take heed to the flock, and do all you can to establish them in the truth, and to arm them against the insinuations of the false teachers."

[2.] *Take heed to yourselves*, for some shepherds will apostatise (v. 30): "*Also of your own selves*, among the members, nay, perhaps, among the ministers of your own church, among you that I am now speaking to (though I am willing to hope it does not go so far as that), *shall men arise speaking perverse things*, things contrary to the right rule of the gospel, and destructive of the great intentions of it. Nay, they will pervert some sayings of the gospel, and wrest them to make them patronize their errors, 2 Pet. iii. 16. Even those that were well thought of among you, and that you had confidence in, will grow proud, and conceited, and opinionative, and will refine upon the gospel, and will pretend with more nice and curious speculations to advance you to a higher form; but it is to *draw away disciples after them*, to make a party for themselves, that shall admire them, and be led by them, and pin their faith upon their sleeve." Some read it, *to draw away disciples after them*—those that are already disciples of Christ, draw them from him to follow them. "Therefore, take heed to yourselves; when you are told that some of you shall betray the gospel, you are each of you concerned to ask, *Is it I?* and to look well to yourselves. This was there fulfilled in *Phygellus and Hermogenes*, who turned away from Paul and the



doctrine he had preached (2 Tim. i. 15), and in *Hymeneus and Philetus*, who concerning the truth erred, and overthrew the faith of some (2 Tim. ii. 18), which explains the expression here. But, though there were some such seducers in the church of Ephesus, yet it should seem by Paul's Epistle to that church (wherein we do not find such complaints and reprehensions as we meet with in some other of his epistles) that that church was not so much infested with false teachers, at least not so much infected with their false doctrine, as some other churches were; but its peace and purity were preserved by the blessing of God on the pains and vigilance of these presbyters, to whom the apostle, in the actual foresight and consideration of the rise of heresies and schisms, as well as of his own death, committed the government of this church.

(3.) Let them consider the great pains that Paul had taken in planting this church (v. 31): "*Remember that for the space of three years*" (for so long he had been preaching in Ephesus, and the parts adjacent) "*I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears*; and be not you negligent in building upon that foundation which I was so diligent to lay." [1.] Paul, like a faithful watchman, had warned them, and, by the warnings he gave men of the danger of their continuing in their Judaism and heathenism, he prevailed with them to embrace Christianity. [2.] He warned every one; besides the public warnings he gave in his preaching, he applied himself to particular persons according as he saw their case called for it, which he had something to say peculiar to. [3.] He was constant in giving warning; he *warned night and day*; his time was filled up with his work. In the night, when he should have been reposing himself, he was dealing with those he could not get to speak with in the day about their souls. [4.] He was indefatigable in it; he *ceased not to warn*. Though they were ever so obstinate against his warnings, yet he did not cease to warn, not knowing but that at length they might, by the grace of God, be overcome; though they were ever so pliable to his warnings, yet he did not think this would be a sufficient excuse for him to desist, but still he warned those that were righteous not to turn from their righteousness, as he had warned them when they were wicked to turn from their wickedness, Ezek. iii. 18—21. [5.] He spoke to them about their souls with a great deal of affection and concern: he *warned them with tears*. As he had served the Lord, so he had served them, *with many tears*, v. 19. He warned them with tears of compassion, thereby showing how much he was himself affected with their misery and danger in a sinful state and way, that he might affect them with it. Thus Paul had begun the good work at Ephesus, thus free had he been of his pains; and why then should they be sparing of their pains in carrying it on?

V. He recommends them to divine direction and influence (v. 32): "*And now, brethren, having given you this solemn charge and caution, I commend you to God*. Now that I have said what I have to say, The Lord be with you; I must leave you, but I leave you in good hands." They were in care what would become of them, how they should go on in their work, break through their difficulties, and what provision would be made for them and their families. In answer to all these perplexities, Paul directs them to look up to God with an eye of faith, and beseeches God to look down on them with an eye of favour.

1. See here to whom he commends them. He calls them brethren, not only as Christians, but as ministers, and thereby encourages them to hope in God, as he had done; for they and he were brethren. (1.) He commends them to God, begs of God to provide for them, to take care of them, and to supply all their needs, and encourages them to cast all their care upon him, with an assurance that he cared for them: "Whatever you want, go to God, let your eye be ever towards him, and your dependence upon him, in all your straits and difficulties; and let this be your comfort, that you have a God to go to, a God all sufficient." *I commend you to God*, that is, to his providence, and to the protection and care of that. It is enough that, from whomsoever we are separated, still we have God nigh unto us, 1 Pet. iv. 19. (2.) He commends them to the word of his grace, by which some understand Christ: he is the word (John i. 1), the word of life, because life is treasured up for us in him (1 John i. 1), and in the same sense he is here called the word of God's grace, because from his fulness we receive grace for grace. He commends them to Christ, puts them into his hand, as being his servants, whom he would in a particular manner take care of. Paul commends them not only to God and to his providence, but to Christ and his grace, as Christ himself did his disciples when he was leaving them: *You believe in God, believe also in me*. It comes to much the same thing, if by the word of his grace we understand the gospel of Christ, for it is Christ in the word that is nigh unto us for our support and encouragement, and his word is spirit and life: "You will find much relief by acting faith on the providence of God, but much more by acting faith on the promises of the gospel." He commends them to the word of Christ's grace, which he spoke to his disciples when he sent them forth, the commission he gave them, with assurance that he would be with them *always to the end of the world*: "Take hold of that word, and God give you the benefit and comfort of it, and you need no more." He commends them to the word of God's grace, not only as the foundation of their hope and the fountain of their joy, but as the rule of their walking:



"I commend you to God, as your Master, whom you are to serve, and I have found him a good Master, and to the word of his grace, as cutting you out your work, and by which you are to govern yourselves; observe the precepts of this word, and then live upon the promises of it."

2. See here what he commends them to the word of God's grace for, not so much for a protection from their enemies, or a provision for their families, as for the spiritual blessings which they most needed and ought most to value. They had received the gospel of the grace of God, and were entrusted to preach it. Now he recommends them to that, (1.) For their edification: "*It is able* (the Spirit of grace working with it and by it) *to build you up*, and you may depend upon this, while you keep close to it, and are deriving daily from it. Though you are already furnished with good gifts, yet this is able to build you up; there is that in it with which you need to be better acquainted and more affected." Note, Ministers, in preaching the word of grace, must aim at their own edification as well as at the edification of others. The most advanced Christians, while they are in this world, are capable of growing, and they will find the word of grace to have still more and more in it to contribute to their growth. It is still able to build them up. (2.) For their glorification: *It is able to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified*. The word of God's grace gives it, not only as it gives the knowledge of it (for *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*), but as it gives the promise of it, the promise of a God that cannot lie, and which is *yea and amen in Christ*; and by the word, as the ordinary vehicle, the Spirit of grace is given (*ch. x. 44*), to be the seal of the promise, and the earnest of the eternal life promised; and thus it is the word of God's grace that gives us the inheritance. Note, [1.] Heaven is an inheritance which gives an indefeasible right to all the heirs; it is an inheritance like that of the Israelites in Canaan, which was by promise and yet by lot, but was *sure to all the seed*. [2.] This inheritance is entailed upon and secured to all those, and those only, that are sanctified; for as those cannot be welcome guests to the holy God, or the holy society above, that are unsanctified, so really heaven would be no heaven to them; but *to all that are sanctified*, that are born again, and on whom the image of God is renewed, it is as sure as almighty power and eternal truth can make it. Those therefore that would make out a title to that inheritance must make it sure that they are among the sanctified, are joined to them and incorporated with them, and partake of the same image and nature; for we cannot expect to be among the glorified hereafter unless we be among the sanctified here.

VI. He recommends himself to them as an example of indifference to this world, and

to every thing in it, which, if they would walk in the same spirit and in the same steps, they would find to contribute greatly to their easy and comfortable passage through it. He had recommended them to God, and to the word of his grace, for spiritual blessings, which, without doubt, are the best blessings; but what shall they do for food for their families, an agreeable subsistence for themselves, and portions for their children? "As to these," Paul says, "do as I did;" and how was that? He here tells them,

1. That he never aimed at worldly wealth (*v. 33*): "*I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*; nor do you, and then you will be easy." There were many in Ephesus, and many of those that had embraced the Christian faith, who were rich, had a great deal of money, and plate, and rich furniture, and wore very good clothes, and made a very good appearance. Now, (1.) Paul was not ambitious to live like them. We may take it in this sense: *I never coveted to have so much silver and gold at command* as I see others have, nor to wear such rich clothes as I see others wear. I neither condemn them nor envy them. I can live comfortably and usefully without living great." The false apostles desired *to make a fair show in the flesh* (*Gal. vi. 12*), to make a figure in the world; but Paul did not do so. *He knew how to want and how to be abased*. (2.) He was not greedy to receive from them, silver, or gold, or apparel; so far from being always craving that he was not so much as coveting, nor desired them to allow him so and so for his pains among them, but was *content with such things as he had*; he never made a gain of them, *2 Cor. xii. 17*. He could not only say with Moses (*Num. xvi. 15*), and with Samuel (*1 Sam. xii. 3, 5*), *Whose ox have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded?* But, "Whose kindness have I coveted, or asked? Or to whom have I been burdensome?" He protests against desiring a gift, *Phil. iv. 17*.

2. That he had worked for his living, and taken a great deal of pains to get bread (*v. 34*) "*Yea, you yourselves know*, and have been eye-witnesses of it, *that these hands of mine have ministered to my necessities, and to those that were with me*; you have seen me busy early and late, cutting out tents and making them up;" and, they being commonly made of leather, it was very hard work. Observe, (1.) Paul was sometimes reduced to necessities, and the want of the common supports of life, though he was so great a favourite of Heaven and so great a blessing to this earth. What an unthinking, unkind, and ungrateful world is this, that could let such a man as Paul be poor in it! (2.) He desired no more than to have his necessities supplied; he did not work at his calling to enrich himself, but to maintain himself with food and raiment. (3.) When he was to earn his bread, he did it by a manual occupation. Paul had a head



and a tongue that he might have got money by, but they were these hands, saith he, *that ministered to my necessities*. What a pity was it that those hands by the laying on of which the Holy Ghost had been so often conferred, those hands by which God had wrought special miracles, and both these at Ephesus too (*ch. xix. 6, 11*), should there be obliged to lay themselves to the needle and shears, the awl and tacking-end, in tent-making, purely to get bread! Paul puts these presbyters (and others in them) in mind of this, that they may not think it strange if they be thus neglected, and yet to go on in their work, and make the best shift they can to live; the less encouragement they have from men, the more they shall have from God. (4.) He worked not only for himself, but for the support of those also that were with him. This was hard indeed. It had better become them to have worked for him (to maintain him as their tutor) than he for them. But so it is; those that are willing to take the labouring oar will find those about them willing they should have it. If Paul will work for the maintenance of his companions, he is welcome to do it.

3. That even then, when he worked for the supply of his own necessities, yet he spared something out of what he got for the relief of others; for this he here obliges them to do (*v. 35*): "*I have shown you all things*, that is, in all the parts of your duty I have set you your copy and given you a good example, and particularly in this, *that so labouring you ought to support the weak*." Some understand it of their supporting the faith of weak believers, by removing the prejudices which some conceived against Christianity, as if the preachers of it made a gainful trade of their preaching, and the gospel was only a trick to get money by, and pick people's pockets. "Now, that you may *cut off occasion from those that seek occasion to reproach us*, and so may support the weak among us, you will do well, for the present, to get your livelihood by the labour of your hands, and not to depend upon your ministry." But I rather understand it of their helping to support the sick, and the poor, and those that could not labour, because it agrees with Paul's exhortation (*Eph. iv. 28*): *Let him labour, working with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth*. We must labour in an honest employment, not only that we may be able to live, but that we may be able to give. This might seem a hard saying, and therefore Paul backs it with a saying of our Master's, which he would have them always to remember. These words our Lord Jesus said; it should seem, they were words he often used to his disciples. When he himself did so much good gratis, and bade them do so too (*Matt. x. 8, 9*), he added this saying, which, though nowhere recorded by the evangelists, yet Paul had by word of mouth from Peter, or some other of

the disciples; and an excellent saying it is, and has something of a paradox in it: *It is more blessed to give than to receive*. "It is" (saith Dr. Tillotson) "a particular endearment of this admirable saying of our Saviour's to us, that, being omitted by the evangelists, and in danger of being lost and forgotten, it was thus happily retrieved by St. Paul, and recorded by St. Luke." It is more blessed to give to others than to receive from others: not only more blessed to be rich, and so on the giving hand, than to be poor, and so on the receiving hand (every one will own this); but more blessed to do good with what we have, be it much or little, than to increase it and make it more. The sentiment of the children of this world is contrary to this; they are afraid of giving. "This giving," they say, "undoes us all;" but they are in hope of getting. *Every one for his gain from his quarter*, Isa. lvi. 11. Clear gain is with them the most blessed thing that can be; but Christ tells us, *It is more blessed* (more excellent in itself, an evidence of a more excellent disposition of mind, and the way to a better blessedness at last) *to give than to receive*. It makes us more like to God, who gives to all, and receives from none; and to the Lord Jesus, *who went about doing good*. It is more blessed to give our pains than to receive pay for it, and what we should delight to do if the necessities of ourselves and families would admit it. It is more pleasant to do good to the grateful, but it is more honourable to do good to the ungrateful, for then we have God to be our paymaster, who will reward in the resurrection of the just what has not otherwise been recompensed.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. 37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him. 38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

After the parting sermon that Paul preached to the elders of Ephesus, which was very affecting, we have here the parting prayer and tears, which were yet more affecting; we can scarcely read the account here given of them, and meditate upon them with dry eyes.

I. They parted with prayer (*v. 36*): *And, when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all*. And, no doubt, it was a prayer every way suited to the present mournful occasion. He committed them to God in this prayer, prayed that he would not leave them, but continue his presence with them. 1. It was a joint prayer. He not only prayed for them, but prayed with them, *prayed with them all*; that they might put up the same petitions for themselves and



one another that he put up to God for them all, and that they might learn what to ask of God for themselves when he was gone. Public prayers are so far from being intended to supersede our own secret prayers, and make them needless, that they are designed to quicken and encourage them, and to direct us in them. When we are alone we should pray over the prayers that our ministers have put up with us. 2. It was a humble reverent prayer. This was expressed by the posture they used: *He kneeled down, and prayed with them*, which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and significant both of adoration and of petition, especially petition for the forgiveness of sin. Paul used it much: *I bow my knees*, Eph. iii. 14. 3. It was a prayer after sermon; and, we may suppose, he prayed over what he had preached. He had committed the care of the church at Ephesus to those elders, and now he prays that God would enable them faithfully to discharge this great trust reposed in them, and would give them those measures of wisdom and grace which it required; he prayed for the flock, and all that belonged to it, *that the great Shepherd of the sheep* would take care of them all, and keep them from being a prey to the grievous wolves. Thus he taught these ministers to pray for those they preached to, *that they might not labour in vain*. 4. It was a parting prayer, which might be likely to leave lasting impressions, as the farewell sermon did. It is good for friends, when they part, to part with prayer, that by praying together just at parting they may be enabled to pray the more feelingly one for another when they are separated, which is one part of our Christian duty, and an improvement of the communion of saints. The Lord watch between us, and watch over us both, when we are absent one from the other, is a good parting prayer (Gen. xxxi. 49), as also that our next meeting may be either nearer heaven or in heaven. Paul here followed the example of Christ, who, when he took leave of his disciples, after he had preached to them, prayed with them all, John xvii. 1.

II. They parted with tears, abundance of tears, and most affectionate embraces, v. 37, 38. 1. *They all wept sorely*. We have reason to think that Paul himself began; though he was determined to go, and saw his call clear to other work, yet he was sorry in his heart to leave them, and many a tear it cost him. He that was so often in tears while he was with them (v. 19, 31), no doubt shed many at parting, so watering what he had sown among them. But the notice is taken of their tears: *They all wept sorely*; there was not a dry eye among them; and it is probable the affectionate expressions Paul used in prayer set them a-weeping. These were tears of love and mutual endearment, like those of Jonathan and David, when they were forced to part, and *wept one*

*with another, until* (as if they wept for strife) *David exceeded*, 1 Sam. xx. 41. 2. *They fell upon Paul's neck, and kissed him*, all, one after another, each bewailing his own loss: "How can I part with this invaluable man, this blessed Paul," says one, "in whom my life is in a manner bound up?"—"Farewell, my dear friend," says another, "a thousand thanks to thee, and ten thousand to God for thee, and for all the pains thou hast taken with me for my good." "And must we part?" says another: "must I lose my spiritual father, nurse, and guide?"—"What will become of us now?" says another, "when we shall no more have him to apply to, and receive direction from? What shall I do, if the Lord take away my master from my head? *My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof*." Note, Those that are most loving are commonly best beloved. Paul, who was a most affectionate friend himself, had friends that were very affectionate to him. These tears at parting with Paul were a grateful return for all the tears he had shed in preaching to them and praying with them. *He that watereth shall be watered also himself*. 3. That which cut them to the heart thus, and made this place such a *Bochim*, *such a place of weepers*, was, *that word which Paul spoke, that he was certain they should see his face no more*. If he had given them directions to follow him, as he did to those that were his usual companions, or any intimation that he would come hereafter and make them a visit, they could have borne this parting pretty well; but when they are told that they shall see his face no more in this world, that it is a final farewell they are now giving and taking, this makes it a great mourning; it makes the farewell just like a funeral, and puts them into this passion of weeping. There were other things for which they sorrowed—that they should lose the benefit of his public performances, and see him no longer presiding in their assemblies should have none of his personal counsels and comforts; and, we hope, they sorrowed for their own sin, in not profiting more by his labours while they had him among them, and which had provoked God to order his remove. But that which gave the most sensible accent to their grief was *that they should see his face no more*. When our friends are separated from us by death, this is the consideration with which we raise up our mourning, that we shall see their faces no more; but we complain not of this as those that have no hope, for if our friends died in Christ, and we live to him, they are gone to see God's face, to behold his glory, with the reflection of which their faces shine, and we hope to be with them shortly. Though we shall see their faces no more in this world, we hope to see them again in a better world, and to be there together for ever and with the Lord.



III. They accompanied him unto the ship, partly to show their respect for him (they would bring him on his way as far as they could), and partly that they might have a little more of his company and conversation; if it must be the last interview, they will have as much of him as they can, and see the last of him. And we have reason to think that when they came to the water-side, and he was about to go on board, their tears and embraces were repeated; for loth to part bids oft farewell. But this was a comfort to both sides, and soon turned this tide of passion, that the presence of Christ both went with him and staid with them.

## CHAP. XXI.

We have, with a great deal of pleasure, attended the apostle in his travels throughout the Gentile nations to preach the gospel, and have seen a great harvest of souls gathered in to Christ; there we have seen likewise what persecutions he endured; yet still out of them all the Lord presently delivered him, 2 Tim. iii. 11. But now we are to attend him to Jerusalem, and there into lasting bonds; the days of his service now seem to be over, and nothing to remain but days of suffering, days of darkness, for they are many. It is a thousand pities that such a workman should be laid aside; yet so it is, and we must not only acquiesce, as his friends then did, saying, "The will of the Lord be done;" but we must believe, and shall find reason to do so, that Paul in the prison, and at the bar, is as truly glorifying God, and serving Christ's interest, as Paul in the pulpit was. In this chapter we have, I. A journal of Paul's voyage from Ephesus to Cæsarea, the next sea-port to Jerusalem, some places he touched at, and his landing there, ver. 1-7. II. The struggles he had with his friends at Cæsarea, who mightily opposed his going up to Jerusalem, but could not prevail, ver. 8-14. III. Paul's journey from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, and the kind entertainment which the Christians there gave him, ver. 15-17. IV. His compliance with the persuasions of the brethren there, who advised him so far to compliment the Jews as to go and purify himself with an offering in the temple, as if he had had a vow, that it might appear he was no such enemy to the Mosaic rites and ceremonies as he was reported to be, ver. 18-26. V. The turning of this very thing against him by the Jews, and the apprehending of him in the temple as a criminal thereupon, ver. 27-30. VI. The narrow escape he had of being pulled to pieces by the rabble, and the taking of him into fair and legal custody by the chief captain, who permitted him to speak for himself to the people, ver. 31-40. And so we have him made a prisoner, and shall never have him otherwise to the end of the history of this book.

AND it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: 2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. 3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. 4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. 5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. 6 And when we had taken our leave

one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. 7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

We may observe here,

I. How much ado Paul had to get clear from Ephesus, intimated in the first words of the chapter, *after we had gotten from them*, that is, were drawn from them as by violence. It was a force put upon both sides; Paul was loth to leave them, and they were loth to part with him, and yet there was no remedy, but so it must be. When good people are taken away by death, they are, as it were, gotten from their friends here below, who struggled hard to have detained them if possible.

II. What a prosperous voyage they had thence. Without any difficulty, *they came with a straight course*, by direct sailing, to Coos, a famous Grecian island, — *the next day to Rhodes*, talked of for the Colossus there, — *thence to Patara*, a famous port, the metropolis of Lycia (v. 1); here they very happily found a ship sailing over into Phenicia, the very course they were steering, v. 2. Providence must be acknowledged when things happen thus opportunely, and we are favoured by some little circumstances that contribute to the expediting of our affairs; and we must say, *It is God that maketh our way perfect*. This ship that was bound for Phenicia (that is, Tyre) they took the convenience of, *went on board, and set sail for Tyre*. In this voyage they discovered Cyprus, the island that Barnabas was of, and which he took care of, and therefore Paul did not visit it, but we left it on the left hand (v. 3), sailed upon the coast of Syria, and at length landed at Tyre, that celebrated mart of the nations, so it had been, but was now reduced; yet something of a trade it had still, *for there the ship was to unlade her burden*, and did so.

III. The halt that Paul made at Tyre; when he had arrived there, he was upon the coast of the land of Israel, and found now that he could compass the remainder of his journey within the time he had fixed.

1. At Tyre he found disciples, some that had embraced the gospel, and professed the Christian faith. Observe, Wherever Paul came, he enquired what disciples were there, found them out, and associated with them; for we know what is the usage with birds of a feather. When Christ was upon earth, though he went sometimes into the coast of Tyre, yet he never went thither to preach the gospel there; nor did he think fit to afford to Tyre and Sidon the advantages which Chorazin and Bethsaida had, though he knew that if they had had them they would have made a better improvement of them, Luke x. 13. 14. But, after the enlarging of the gospel-commission, Christ was preached

at Tyre, and had disciples there; and to this, some think, that prophecy concerning Tyre had reference (Isa. xxiii. 18), *Her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord.*

2. Paul, *finding those disciples at Tyre, tarried there seven days*, they urging him to stay with them as long as he could. He staid seven days at Troas (*ch. xx. 6*), and here so many days at Tyre, that he might be sure to spend one Lord's day with them, and so might have an opportunity of preaching publicly among them; for it is the desire of good men to do good wherever they come, and where we find disciples we may either benefit them or be benefited by them.

3. The disciples at Tyre were endowed with such gifts that they could by the Spirit foretell the troubles Paul would meet with at Jerusalem; for the *Holy Ghost witnessed it in every city, ch. xx. 23*. Being a thing that would be so much talked of when it came to pass, God saw fit to have it much prophesied of before, that people's faith, instead of being offended, might be confirmed. And withal they were endowed with such graces that foreseeing his troubles, out of love to him and concern for the church, especially the churches of the Gentiles, that could ill spare him, they begged of him that *he would not go up to Jerusalem*, for they hoped the decree was conditional: If he go up, he will come into trouble there; as the prediction to David that *the men of Keilah will deliver him up* (that is, if he venture himself with them); and therefore they said to him, *by the Spirit, that he should not go up*, because they concluded it would be most for the glory of God that he should continue at liberty; and it was not at all their fault to think so, and consequently to dissuade him; but it was their mistake, for his trial would be for the glory of God and the furtherance of the gospel, and he knew it; and the importunity that was used with him, to dissuade him from it, renders his pious and truly heroic resolution the more illustrious.

4. The disciples of Tyre, though they were none of Paul's converts, yet showed a very great respect to Paul, whose usefulness in the church they had heard so much of when he departed from Tyre. Though they had had but seven days' acquaintance with him, yet, as if he had been some great man, they all came together, *with their wives and children*, solemnly to take leave of him, to beg his blessing, and to bring him as far on his way as the sea would permit them. Note, (1.) We should pay respect, not only to our own ministers, that are over us in the Lord, and admonish us, and, for their work's sake among us, *esteem them highly in love*, but we must, as there is occasion, testify our love and respect to all the faithful ministers of Christ, both for his sake whose ministers they are, and for their work's sake among others. (2.) We must, in a particular manner, honour those whom God hath singularly honoured,

by making them eminently useful in their generation. (3.) It is good to train up children in a respect to good people and good ministers. This was particularly remarkable at Tyre, which we have not met with any where else, that they brought their wives and children to attend Paul, to do him the more honour and to receive benefit by his instructions and prayers; and as angry notice was taken of the children of the idolaters of Bethel, that mocked a prophet, so, no doubt, gracious notice was taken of the children of the disciples at Tyre, that honoured an apostle, as Christ accepted the hosannas of the little children. (4.) We should be good husbands of our opportunities, and make the utmost we can of them for the good of our souls. *They brought Paul on his way*, that they might have so much the more of his company and his prayers. Some refer us to Ps. xlv. 12, as a prediction of this, *The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift*; for it is probable that they made some presents to Paul at parting, as usual to our friends that are going to sea, *ch. xxviii. 10*.

5. They parted with prayer, as Paul and the Ephesian elders had done, *ch. xx. 36*. Thus Paul has taught us by example, as well as rule, to pray always, to pray without ceasing. *We kneeled down on the shore and prayed*. Paul prayed for himself, prayed for them, prayed for all the churches; as he was much in prayer so he was mighty in prayer. They prayed upon the shore, that their last farewell might be sanctified and sweetened with prayer. Those that are going to sea should, when they quit the shore, commit themselves to God by prayer, and put themselves under his protection, as those that hope, even when they leave the *terra firma*, to find firm footing for their faith in the providence and promise of God. They kneeled down on the shore, though we may suppose it either stony or dirty, and there prayed. Paul would that *men should pray every where*, and so he did himself; and, where he lifted up his prayer, he bowed his knees. Mr. George Herbert says, *Kneeling never spoiled silk stockings*.

6. They parted at last (*v. 6*): *When we had taken our leave one of another*, with the most affectionate embraces and expressions of love and grief, *we took ship* to be gone, and *they returned home again*, each complaining that this is a parting world. Observe how they disposed of themselves: "We, that had a journey before us, took ship, thankful that we had a ship to carry us; and those, who had no occasions to call them abroad returned home again, thankful that they had a home to go to." *Rejoice Zebulun in thy going out, and Issachar in thy tents*. Paul left his blessing behind him with those that returned home, and those that staid sent their prayers after those that went to sea.

IV. Their arrival at Ptolemais, which was not far from Tyre (*v. 7*): *We came to Ptolemais*, which some think is the same place with



Accho, which we find in the tribe of Asher, Judg. i. 31. Paul begged leave to go ashore there, *to salute the brethren*, to enquire of their state, and to testify his good will to them; though he could not stay long with them, yet he would not pass by them without paying his respects to them, and he *abode with them one day*, perhaps it was a Lord's day; better a short stay than no visit.

8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came into Cæsarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one of the seven*; and abode with him. 9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. 10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judæa a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle; and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles. 12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

We have here Paul and his company arrived at length at Cæsarea, where he designed to make some stay, it being the place where the gospel was first preached to the Gentiles, and *the Holy Ghost fell upon them*, ch. x. 1, 44. Now here we are told,

I. Who it was that entertained Paul and his company at Cæsarea. He seldom had occasion to go to a public house, but, wherever he came, some friend or other took him in, and bade him welcome. Observe, those that had sailed together parted when the voyage was accomplished, according as their business was. "Those that were concerned in the cargo staid where the ship was to *unlade her burden* (v. 3); others, when they came to Ptolemais, went as their occasions led them; but we that were of Paul's company went where he went, and came to Cæsarea." Those that travel together through this world will separate at death, and then it will appear who are of Paul's company and who are not. Now at Cæsarea.

1 They were entertained by Philip the evangelist, whom we left at Cæsarea many years ago, after he had baptized the eunuch (ch. viii. 40), and there we now find him again. (1.) He was originally a deacon, one of the seven that were chosen to serve tables, ch. vi. 5. (2.) He was now and had long been an evangelist, one that went about to plant and water churches, as the apostles did, and gave himself, as they did, *to the word and prayer*; thus, having used the office of a deacon well, he purchased to himself a good degree; and, having been faithful in a few things, was made ruler over many things. (3.) He had a house at Cæsarea, fit to entertain Paul and all his company, and he bade him and them very welcome to it: *We entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, and we abode with him*. Thus does it become Christians and ministers, according as their ability is, to use hospitality one to another, without grudging, 1 Pet. iv. 9.

2. This Philip had four maiden daughters, who did prophesy, v. 9. It intimates that they prophesied of Paul's troubles at Jerusalem, as others had done, and dissuaded him from going; or perhaps they prophesied for his comfort and encouragement, in reference to the difficulties that were before him. Here was a further accomplishment of that prophecy, Joel ii. 28, of such a plentiful pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh that their sons and their daughters should prophesy, that is, foretell things to come.

II. A plain and full prediction of the sufferings of Paul, by a noted prophet, v. 10, 11. 1. Paul and his company tarried many days at Cæsarea, perhaps Cornelius was yet living there, and (though Philip lodged them) yet might be many ways kind to them, and induce them to stay there. What cause Paul saw to tarry so long there, and to make so little haste at the latter end of his journey to Jerusalem, when he seemed so much in haste at the beginning of it, we cannot tell; but we are sure he did not stay either there or any where else to be idle; he measured his time by days, and numbered them. 2. *Agabus the prophet came to Cæsarea from Judea*; this was he of whom we read before, who came from Jerusalem to Antioch, to foretell a general famine, ch. xi. 27, 28. See how God dispenseth his gifts variously. To Paul was given the word of wisdom and knowledge, as an apostle, by the Spirit, and the gifts of healing; to Agabus, and to Philip's daughters, was given prophecy, by the same Spirit—the foretelling of things to come, which came to pass according to the prediction. See 1 Cor. xii. 8, 10. So that that which was the most eminent gift of the Spirit under the Old Testament, the foretelling of things to come, was under the New Testament quite outshone by other gifts, and was bestowed upon those that were of less note in the church. It should seem as if Agabus came on purpose to Cæsarea, to meet Paul with this prophetic intel-



igence. 3. He foretold Paul's bonds at Jerusalem, (1.) By a sign, as the prophets of old did, Isaiah (ch. xx. 3), Jeremiah (ch. xiii. 1; xxvii. 2), Ezekiel (ch. iv. 1; xii. 3), and many others. *Agabus took Paul's girdle*, when he laid it by, or perhaps took it from about him, and with it bound first his own hands, and then his own feet, or perhaps bound his hands and feet together; this was designed both to confirm the prophecy (it was as sure to be done as if it were done already) and to affect those about him with it, because that which we see usually makes a greater impression upon us than that which we only hear of. (2.) By an explication of the sign: *Thus saith the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of prophecy, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and, as they dealt with his Master (Matt. xx. 18, 19), shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles*, as the Jews in other places had all along endeavoured to do, by accusing him to the Roman governors. Paul had this express warning given him of his troubles, that he might prepare for them, and that when they came they might be no surprise nor terror to him; the general notice given us *that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God* should be of the same use to us.

III. The great importunity which his friends used with him to dissuade him from going forward to Jerusalem, v. 12. "Not only those of that place, but we that were of Paul's company, and among the rest Luke himself, who had heard this often before, and seen Paul's resolution notwithstanding, besought him with tears that he would not go up to Jerusalem, but steer his course some other way." Now, 1. Here appeared a commendable affection to Paul, and a value for him, upon account of his great usefulness in the church. Good men that are very active sometimes need to be dissuaded from overworking themselves, and good men that are very bold need to be dissuaded from exposing themselves too far. *The Lord is for the body*; and so must we be. 2. Yet there was a mixture of infirmity, especially in those of Paul's company, who knew he undertook this journey by divine direction, and had seen with what resolution he had before broken through the like opposition. But we see in them the infirmity incident to us all; when we see trouble at a distance, and have only a general notice of it, we can make light of it; but when it comes near we begin to shrink, and draw back. *Now that it toucheth thee thou art troubled*, Job iv. 5.

IV. The holy bravery and intrepidity with which Paul persisted in his resolution, v. 13.

1. He reproves them for dissuading him. Here is a quarrel of love on both sides, and very sincere and strong affections clashing with each other. They love him dearly, and therefore oppose his resolution; he loves them dearly, and therefore chides them for opposing it: *What mean you to weep and to break*

*my heart?* They were an offence to him, as Peter was to Christ, when, in a like case, he said, *Master, spare thyself*. Their weeping about him *broke his heart*. (1.) It was a temptation to him, it shocked him, it began to weaken and slacken his resolution, and caused him to entertain thoughts of tacking about: "I know I am appointed to suffering, and you ought to animate and encourage me, and to say that which will strengthen my heart; but you, with your tears, break my heart, and discourage me. What do you mean by doing thus? Has not our Master told us to take up our cross? And would you have me to avoid mine?" (2.) It was a trouble to him that they should so earnestly press him to that in which he could not gratify them without wronging his conscience. Paul was of a very tender spirit. As he was much in tears himself, so he had a compassionate regard to the tears of his friends; they made a great impression upon him, and would bring him almost to yield to any thing. But now it breaks his heart, when he is under a necessity of denying the request of his weeping friends. It was an unkind kindness, a cruel pity, thus to torment him with their dissuasions, and to add affliction to his grief. When our friends are called out to sufferings, we shall show our love rather by comforting them than by sorrowing for them. But observe, These Christians at Cæsarea, if they could have foreseen the particulars of that event, the general notice of which they received with so much heaviness, would have been better reconciled to it for their own sakes; for, when Paul was made a prisoner at Jerusalem, he was presently sent to Cæsarea, the very place where he now was (ch. xxiii. 33), and there he continued at least *two years* (ch. xxiv. 27), and he was a prisoner at large, as appears (ch. xxiv. 23), orders being given that he should have liberty to go among his friends, and his friends to come to him; so that the church at Cæsarea had much more of Paul's company and help when he was imprisoned than they could have had if he had been at liberty. That which we oppose, as thinking it to operate much against us, may be overruled by the providence of God to work for us, which is a reason why we should follow providence, and not fear it.

2. He repeats his resolution to go forward, notwithstanding: "*What mean you to weep thus? I am ready to suffer whatever is appointed for me. I am fully determined to go, whatever comes of it, and therefore it is to no purpose for you to oppose it. I am willing to suffer, and therefore why are you unwilling that I should suffer? Am not I nearest myself, and fittest to judge for myself? If the trouble found me unready, it would be a trouble indeed, and you might well weep at the thoughts of it. But, blessed be God, it does not. It is very welcome to me, and therefore should not be such a terror to you. For my part, I am ready,*" ετοιμῶς ἔχω — *I have myself in a readiness, as soldiers for*



an engagement. "I expect trouble, I count upon it, it will be no surprise to me. I was told at first *what great things I must suffer*," ch. ix. 16. "I am prepared for it, by a clear conscience, a firm confidence in God, a holy contempt of the world and the body, a lively faith in Christ, and a joyful hope of eternal life. I can *bid it welcome*, as we do a friend that we look for, and have made preparation for. I can, through grace, not only bear it, but rejoice in it." Now, (1.) See how far his resolution extends: You are told that I must be bound at Jerusalem, and you would have me keep away for fear of this. I tell you, *I am ready not only to be bound, but, if the will of God be so, to die at Jerusalem*; not only to lose my liberty, but to lose my life." It is our wisdom to think of the worst that may befall us, and to prepare accordingly, that we may *stand complete in all the will of God*. (2.) See what it is that carries him out thus, that makes him willing to suffer and die: it is *for the name of the Lord Jesus*. All that a man has will he give for his life; but life itself will Paul give for the service and honour of the name of Christ.

V. The patient acquiescence of his friends in his resolution, v. 14. 1. They submitted to the wisdom of a good man. They had carried the matter as far as they could with decency; but, "*when he would not be persuaded, we ceased our importunity*." Paul knows best his own mind, and what he has to do, and it becomes us to leave it to himself, and not to censure him for what he does, nor to say he is rash, and wilful, and humoursome, and has a spirit of contradiction, as some people are apt to judge of those that will not do just as they would have them do. No doubt, Paul has a good reason for his resolution, though he sees cause to keep it to himself, and God has gracious ends to serve in confirming him in it." It is good manners not to over-press those in their own affairs that will not be persuaded. 2. They submitted to the will of a good God: *We ceased*, saying, *The will of the Lord be done*. They did not resolve his resolution into his stubbornness, but into his willingness to suffer, and God's will that he should. *Father in heaven, thy will be done*, as it is a rule to our prayers and to our practice, so it is to our patience. This may refer, (1.) To Paul's present firmness; he is inflexible, and unpersuadable, and in this they see the will of the Lord done. "It is he that has wrought this fixed resolution in him, and therefore we acquiesce in it." Note, In the turning of the hearts of our friends or ministers, this way or that way (and it may be quite another way than we could wish), we should eye the hand of God, and submit to that. (2.) To his approaching sufferings: "If there be no remedy, but Paul will run himself into bonds, the will of the Lord Jesus be done. We have done all that we could do on our parts to prevent it, and

now we leave it to God, we leave it to Christ, to whom the Father has committed all judgment, and therefore we do, not as we will, but as he will." Note, When we see trouble coming, and particularly that of our ministers' being silenced or removed from us, it becomes us to say, *The will of the Lord be done*. God is wise, and knows how to make all work for good, and therefore "welcome his holy will." Not only, "The will of the Lord must be done, and there is no remedy;" but, "Let the will of the Lord be done, for his will is his wisdom, and he doeth all according to the counsel of it; let him therefore do with us and ours as seemeth good in his eyes." When a trouble is come, this must allay our griefs, that the will of the Lord is done; when we see it coming, this must silence our fears, that the will of the Lord shall be done, to which we must say, *Amen*, let it be done.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. 16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Cæsarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. 17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: 21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs. 22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. 23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; 24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are no-

thing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. 25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

In these verses we have,

I. Paul's journey to Jerusalem from Cæsarea, and the company that went along with him. 1. They *took up their carriages*, their bag and baggage, and as it should seem, like poor travellers or soldiers, were their own porters; so little had they of change of raiment. *Omnia mea mecum porto—My property is all about me.* Some think they had with them the money that was collected in the churches of Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints at Jerusalem. If they could have persuaded Paul to go some other way, they would gladly have gone along with him; but if, notwithstanding their dissuasive, he will go to Jerusalem, they do not say, "Let him go by himself then;" but as Thomas, in a like case, when Christ would go into danger at Jerusalem, *Let us go and die with him*, John xi. 16. Their resolution to cleave to Paul was like that of Ittai to cleave to David (2 Sam. xv. 21): *In what place my Lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, there also will thy servant be.* Thus Paul's boldness emboldened them. 2. Certain of the disciples of Cæsarea went along with them. Whether they designed to go however, and took this opportunity of going with so much good company, or whether they went on purpose to see if they could do Paul any service and if possible prevent his trouble, or at least minister to him in it, does not appear. The less while that Paul is likely to enjoy his liberty the more industrious they are to improve every opportunity of conversation with him. Elisha kept close to Elijah when he knew the time was at hand that he should be taken up. 3. They brought with them an honest old gentleman that had a house of his own at Jerusalem, in which he would gladly entertain Paul and his company, *one Mnason of Cyprus* (v. 16), *with whom we should lodge.* Such a great concourse of people there was to the feast that it was a hard matter to get lodgings; the public houses would be taken up by those of the better sort, and it was looked upon as a scandalous thing for those that had private houses to let their

rooms out at those times, but they must freely accommodate strangers with them. Every one then would choose his friends to be his guests, and Mnason took Paul and his company to be his lodgers; though he had heard what trouble Paul was likely to come into, which might bring those that entertained him into trouble too, yet he shall be welcome to him, whatever comes of it. This Mnason is called an *old disciple*—a disciple *from the beginning*; some think, one of the seventy disciples of Christ, or one of the first converts after the pouring out of the Spirit, or one of the first that was converted by the preaching of the gospel in Cyprus, *ch. xiii. 4.* However it was, it seems he had been long a Christian, and was now in years. Note, It is an honourable thing to be an old disciple of Jesus Christ, to have been enabled by the grace of God to continue long in a course of duty, stedfast in the faith, and growing more and more prudent and experienced to a good old age. And with these old disciples one would choose to lodge; for the multitude of their years will teach wisdom.

II. Paul's welcome at Jerusalem. 1. Many of the brethren there *received him gladly*, v. 17. As soon as they had notice that he was come to town, they went to his lodgings at Mnason's house, and congratulated him on his safe arrival, and told him they were glad to see him, and invited him to their houses, accounting it an honour to be known to one that was such an eminent servant of Christ. Streso observes that the word here used concerning the welcome they gave to the apostles, *ἀσπέντως ἀποδέχαι*, is used concerning the welcome of the apostles' doctrine, *ch. ii. 41.* They *gladly received his word.* We think if we had Paul among us we should gladly receive him; but it is a question whether we should or no if, having his doctrine, we do not gladly receive that. 2. They paid a visit to James and the elders of the church, at a church-meeting (v. 18): "*The day following, Paul went in unto James, and took us with him, that were his companions, to introduce us into acquaintance with the church at Jerusalem.*" It should seem that James was now the only apostle that was resident at Jerusalem; the rest had dispersed themselves, to preach the gospel in other places. But still they forecasted to have an apostle at Jerusalem, perhaps sometimes one and sometimes another, because there was a great resort thither from all parts. James was now upon the spot, and all the elders or presbyters that were the ordinary pastors of the church, both to preach and govern, were present. Paul saluted them all, paid his respects to them, enquired concerning their welfare, and gave them the right hand of fellowship. He *saluted them*, that is, he wished them all health and happiness, and prayed to God to bless them. The proper signification of salutation is, wishing salvation to you: *salve*, or *salus tibi sit*; like



peace be unto you. And such mutual salutations, or good wishes, very well become Christians, in token of their love to each other and joint regard to God.

III. The account they had from him of his ministry among the Gentiles, and their satisfaction in it. 1 He gave them a narrative of the success of the gospel in those countries where he had been employed, knowing it would be very acceptable to them to hear of the enlarging of Christ's kingdom: *He declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry, v. 19.* Observe how modestly he speaks, not what things he had wrought (he was but the instrument), but what God had wrought by his ministry. It was *not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* He planted and watered, but God gave the increase. He declared it particularly, that the grace of God might appear the more illustrious in the circumstances of his success. Thus David will tell others what God has done for his soul (Ps. lxi. 16), as Paul here what God has done by his hand, and both that their friends may help them to be thankful. 2. Hence they took occasion to give praise to God (v. 20): *When they heard it, they glorified the Lord.* Paul ascribed it all to God, and to God they gave the praise of it. They did not break out into high encomiums of Paul, but left it to his Master to say to him, *Well done, good and faithful servant*; but they gave glory to the grace of God, which was extended to the Gentiles. Note, The conversion of sinners ought to be the matter of our joy and praise as it is of the angels'. God had honoured Paul more than any of them, in making his usefulness more extensive, yet they did not envy him, nor were they jealous of his growing reputation, but, on the contrary, *glorified the Lord.* And they could not do more to encourage Paul to go on cheerfully in his work than to glorify God for his success in it; for, if God be praised, Paul is pleased.

IV. The request of James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem to Paul, or their advice rather, that he would gratify the believing Jews by showing some compliance with the ceremonial law, and appearing publicly in the temple to offer sacrifice, which was not a thing in itself sinful; for the ceremonial law, though it was by no means to be imposed upon the Gentile converts (as the false teachers would have it, and thereby endeavoured to subvert the gospel), yet it was not become unlawful as yet to those that had been bred up in the observance of it, but were far from expecting justification by it. It was dead, but not buried; dead, but not yet deadly. And, being not sinful, they thought it was a piece of prudence in Paul to conform thus far. Observe the counsel they give to Paul herein, not as having authority over him, but an affection for him.

1. They desired him to take notice of the

great numbers there were of the Jewish converts: *Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are who believe.* They called him brother, for they looked upon him as a joint-commissioner with them in gospel-work. Though they were of the circumcision and he the apostle of the Gentiles, though they were conformists and he a nonconformist, yet they were brethren, and owned the relation. Thou hast been in some of our assemblies, and seest how numerous they are: *how many myriads of Jews believe.* The word signifies, not thousands, but *ten thousands.* Even among the Jews, who were most prejudiced against the gospel, yet there were great multitudes that received it; for the grace of God can break down the strongest holds of Satan: The number of the names at first was but one hundred and twenty, yet now many thousands. Let none therefore despise the day of small things; for, though the beginning be small, God can make the latter end greatly to increase. Hereby it appeared that God had not quite cast away his people the Jews, for among them there was a remnant, an election, that obtained (see Rom. xi. 1, 5, 7): *many thousands that believed.* And this account which they could give to Paul of the success of the gospel among the Jews was, no doubt, as grateful to Paul as the account which he gave them of the conversion of the Gentiles was to them; for his heart's desire and prayer to God for the Jews was *that they might be saved.*

2. They informed him of a prevailing infirmity these believing Jews laboured under, of which they could not yet be cured: *They are all zealous of the law.* They believe in Christ as the true Messiah, they rest upon his righteousness and submit to his government; but they know the law of Moses was of God, they have found spiritual benefit in their attendance on the institutions of it, and therefore they can by no means think of parting with it, no, nor of growing cold to it. And perhaps they urged Christ's being *made under the law*, and observing it (which was designed to be our deliverance from the law), as a reason for their continuance under it. This was a great weakness and mistake, to be so fond of the shadows when the substance was come, to keep their necks under a yoke of bondage when Christ had come to make them free. But see, (1.) The power of education and long usage, and especially of a ceremonial law. (2.) The charitable allowance that must be made in consideration of these. These Jews that believed were not therefore disowned and rejected as no Christians because they were for the law, nay, were zealous for it, while it was only in their own practice, and they did not impose it upon others. Their being zealous of the law was capable of a good construction, which charity would put upon it; and it was capable of a good excuse, considering what they were brought up in, and among whom they lived.



3. They gave him to understand that these Jews, who were so zealous of the law, were ill-affected to him, v. 21. Paul himself, though as faithful a servant as any Christ ever had, yet could not get the good word of all that belonged to Christ's family: "*They are informed of thee* (and form their opinion of thee accordingly) that thou not only dost not teach the Gentiles to observe the law, as some would have had thee (we have prevailed with them to drop that), but *dost teach all the Jews who are dispersed among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, not to circumcise their children nor to walk after the customs* of our nation, which were of divine appointment, so far as they might be observed even among the Gentiles, at a distance from the temple,—not to observe the fasts and feasts of the church, not to wear their phylacteries, nor abstain from unclean meats." Now, (1.) It was true that Paul preached the abrogation of the law of Moses, taught them that it was impossible to be justified by it, and therefore we are not bound up any longer to the observance of it. But, (2.) It was false that he taught them to forsake Moses; for the religion he preached tended not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He preached Christ (*the end of the law for righteousness*), and repentance and faith, in the exercise of which we are to make great use of the law. The Jews among the Gentiles whom Paul taught were so far from forsaking Moses that they never understood him better, nor ever embraced him so heartily as now when they were taught to make use of him as a *schoolmaster to bring them to Christ*. But even the believing Jews, having got this notion of Paul, that he was an enemy to Moses, and perhaps giving too much regard to the unbelieving Jews too, were much exasperated against him. Their ministers, the elders here present, loved and honoured him, and approved of what he did, and called him brother, but the people could hardly be induced to entertain a favourable thought of him; for it is certain the least judicious are the most censorious, the weak-headed are the hot-headed. They could not distinguish upon Paul's doctrine as they ought to have done, and therefore condemned it in the gross, through ignorance.

4. They therefore desired Paul that he would by some public act, now that he had come to Jerusalem, make it to appear that the charge against him was false, and that he did not teach people to forsake Moses and to break the customs of the Jewish church, for he himself retained the use of them.

(1.) They conclude that something of this kind must be done: "*What is it therefore? What must be done? The multitude will hear that thou art come to town.*" This is an inconvenience that attends men of fame, that their coming and going are taken notice of more than other people's, and will be talked of, by some for good-will and by others for ill-will. "When they hear thou art come,

*they must needs come together, they will expect that we call them together, to advise with them whether we should admit thee to preach among us as a brother or no; or, they will come together of themselves expecting to hear thee.*" Now something must be done to satisfy them that Paul does not teach the people to forsake Moses, and they think it necessary, [1.] For Paul's sake, that his reputation should be cleared, and that so good a man may not lie under any blemish, nor so useful a man labour under any disadvantage which may obstruct his usefulness. [2.] For the people's sake, that they may not continue prejudiced against so good a man, nor lose the benefit of his ministry by those prejudices. [3.] For their own sake, that since they knew it was their duty to own Paul their doing it might not be turned to their reproach among those that were under their charge.

(2.) They produce a fair opportunity which Paul might take to clear himself: "*Do this that we say unto thee, take our advice in this case. We have four men, Jews who believe, of our own churches, and they have a vow on them, a vow of Nazariteship for a certain time; their time has now expired (v. 23), and they are to offer their offering according to the law, when they shave the head of their separation, a he-lamb for a burnt-offering, a ewe-lamb for a sin-offering, and a ram for a peace-offering, with other offerings appertinent to them, Num. vi. 13—20. Many used to do this together, when their vow expired about the same time, either for the greater expedition or for the greater solemnity. Now Paul having so far of late complied with the law as to take upon him the vow of a Nazarite, and to signify the expiration of it by shaving his head at Cenchrea (ch. xviii. 18), according to the custom of those who lived at a distance from the temple, they desire him but to go a little further, and to join with these four in offering the sacrifices of a Nazarite: "Purify thyself with them according to the law; and be willing not only to take that trouble, but to be at charges with them, in buying sacrifices for this solemn occasion, and to join with them in the sacrifice."* This, they think, will effectually stop the mouth of calumny, and everyone will be convinced that the report was false, that Paul was not the man he was represented to be, did not teach the Jews to forsake Moses, but that he himself, being originally a Jew, walked orderly, and kept the law; and then all would be well.

5. They enter a protestation that this shall be no infringement at all of the decree lately made in favour of the Gentile converts, nor do they intend by this in the least to derogate from the liberty allowed them (v. 25): "*As touching the Gentiles who believe, we have written and concluded, and resolve to abide by it, that they observe no such things; we would not have them to be bound up by the ceremonial law by any means, but only*



that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; but let not them be tied to the Jewish sacrifices or purifications, nor any of their rites and ceremonies." They knew how jealous Paul was for the preservation of the liberty of the converted Gentiles, and therefore expressly covenant to abide by that. Thus far is their proposal.

V. Here is Paul's compliance with it. He was willing to gratify them in this matter. Though he would not be persuaded not to go to Jerusalem, yet, when he was there, he was persuaded to do as they there did, v. 26. Then Paul took the men, as they advised, and the very next day, purifying himself with them, and not with multitude nor tumult, as he himself pleads (ch. xxiv. 18), he entered into the temple, as other devout Jews that came upon such errands did, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification to the priests; desiring the priest would appoint a time when the offering should be offered for every one of them, one for each. Ainsworth, on Num. vi. 18, quotes out of Maimonides a passage which gives some light to this: *If a man say, Upon me be half the oblations of a Nazarite, or, Upon me be half the shaving of a Nazarite, then he brings half the offerings by what Nazarite he will, and that Nazarite pays his offering out of that which is his.* So Paul did here; he contributed what he vowed to the offerings of these Nazarites, and some think bound himself to the law of Nazariteship, and to an attendance at the temple with fastings and prayers for seven days, not designing that the offering should be offered till then, which was what he signified to the priest. Now it has been questioned whether James and the elders did well to give Paul this advice, and whether he did well to take it. 1. Some have blamed this occasional conformity of Paul's, as indulging the Jews too much in their adherence to the ceremonial law, and a discouragement of those who stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Was it not enough for James and the elders of Jerusalem to connive at this mistake in the Jewish converts themselves, but must they wheedle Paul to countenance them in it? Had it not been better, when they had told Paul how zealous the believing Jews were for the law, if they had desired him, whom God had endued with such excellent gifts, to take pains with their people to convince them of their error, and to show them that they were made free from the law by their marriage to Christ? Rom. vii. 4. To urge him to encourage them in it by his example seems to have more in it of fleshly wisdom than of the grace of God. Surely Paul knew what he had to do better than they could teach him. But, 2. Others think the advice was prudent and good, and Paul's following it was justifiable enough, as the case stood. It was Paul's avowed principle, *To the Jews became I as a Jew, that I might gain*

the Jews, 1 Cor. ix. 20. He had circumcised Timothy, to please the Jews; though he would not constantly observe the ceremonial law, yet, to gain an opportunity of doing good, and to show how far he could comply, he would occasionally go to the temple and join in the sacrifices there. Those that are weak in the faith are to be borne with, when those that undermine the faith must be opposed. It is true, this compliance of Paul's sped ill to him, for this very thing by which he hoped to pacify the Jews did but provoke them, and bring him into trouble; yet this is not a sufficient ground to go upon in condemning it: Paul might do well, and yet suffer for it. But perhaps the wise God overruled both their advice and Paul's compliance with it to serve a better purpose than was intended; for we have reason to think that when the believing Jews, who had endeavoured by their zeal for the law to recommend themselves to the good opinion of those who believed not, saw how barbarously they used Paul (who endeavoured to oblige them), they were by this more alienated from the ceremonial law than they could have been by the most argumentative or affecting discourses. They saw it was in vain to think of pleasing men that would be pleased with nothing else but the rooting out of Christianity. Integrity and uprightness will be more likely to preserve us than sneaking compliances. And when we consider what a great trouble it must needs be to James and the presbyters, in the reflection upon it, that they had by their advice brought Paul into trouble, it should be a warning to us not to press men to oblige us by doing any thing contrary to their own mind.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, 28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. 29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) 30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. 31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 Who

immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. 33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. 34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. 35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. 37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? 38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? 39 But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. 40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

We have here Paul brought into a captivity which we are not likely to see the end of; for after this he is either hurried from one bar to another, or lies neglected, first in one prison and then in another, and can neither be tried nor bailed. When we see the beginning of a trouble, we know not either how long it will last or how it will issue.

I. We have here Paul seized, and laid hold on.

1. He was seized in the temple, when he was there attending the days of his purifying, and the solemn services of those days, *v.* 27. Formerly he had been well known in the temple, but now he had been so long in his travels abroad that he had become a stranger there; so that it was not till *the seven days were almost ended* that he was taken notice of by those that had an evil eye towards him. In the temple, where he should have been

protected, as in a sanctuary, he was most violently set upon by those who did what they could to have his blood mingled with his sacrifices—in the temple, where he should have been welcomed as one of the greatest ornaments of it that ever had been there since the Lord of the temple left it. The temple, which they themselves pretended such a mighty zeal for, yet did they themselves thus profane. Thus is the church polluted by none more than by popish persecutors, under the colour of the church's name and interest.

2. The informers against him were the Jews of Asia, not those of Jerusalem—the Jews of the dispersion, who knew him best, and who were most exasperated against him. Those who seldom came up to worship at the temple in Jerusalem themselves, but contentedly lived at a distance from it, in pursuit of their private advantages, yet appeared most zealous for the temple, as if thereby they would atone for their habitual neglect of it.

3. The method they took was to raise the mob, and to incense them against him. They did not go to the high priest, or the magistrates of the city, with their charge (probably because they expected not to receive countenance from them), but *they stirred up all the people*, who were at this time more than ever disposed to any thing that was tumultuous and seditious, riotous and outrageous. Those are fittest to be employed against Christ and Christianity that are governed least by reason and most by passion; therefore Paul described the Jewish persecutors to be not only wicked, but absurd unreasonable men.

4. The arguments wherewith they exasperated the people against him were popular, but very false and unjust. They cried out, "*Men of Israel, help.* If you are indeed men of Israel, true-born Jews, that have a concern for your church and your country, now is your time to show it, by helping to seize an enemy to both." Thus *they cried after him as after a thief* (Job xxx. 5), or after a mad dog. Note, The enemies of Christianity, since they could never prove it to be an ill thing, have been always very industrious, right or wrong, to put it into an ill name, and so run it down by outrage and outcry. It had become men of Israel to help Paul, who preached up him who was so much the *glory of his people Israel*; yet here the popular fury will not allow them to be men of Israel, unless they will help against him. This was like, *Stop thief*, or Athaliah's cry, *Treason, treason*; what is wanting in right is made up in noise.

5. They charge upon him both bad doctrine and bad practice, and both against the Mosaic ritual.

(1.) They charge upon him bad doctrine; not only that he holds corrupt opinions himself, but that he vents and publishes them, though not here at Jerusalem, yet in other places, nay in all places he teaches all men,



every where; so artfully is the crime aggravated, as if, because he was an itinerant, he was a ubiquitary: "He spreads to the utmost of his power certain damnable and heretical positions," [1.] Against the people of the Jews. He had taught that Jews and Gentiles stand on the same level before God, and neither circumcision avails any thing nor uncircumcision; nay, he had taught against the unbelieving Jews that they were rejected (and therefore had separated from them and their synagogues), and this is interpreted to be speaking against the whole nation, as if no doubt but *they were the people, and wisdom must die with them* (Job xii. 2), whereas God, though he had cast them off, yet had not *cast away his people*, Rom. xi. 1. They were *Lo-ammi, not a people* (Hos. i. 9), and yet pretended to be the only people. Those commonly seem most jealous for the church's name that belong to it in name only. [2.] Against the law. His teaching men to believe the gospel as the end of the law, and the perfection of it, was interpreted his preaching against the law; whereas it was so far from making void the law that it established it, Rom. iii. 31. [3.] Against *this place*, the temple. Because he taught men to pray every where, he was reproached as an enemy to the temple, and perhaps because he sometimes mentioned the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and of the Jewish nation, which his Master had foretold. Paul had himself been active in persecuting Stephen, and putting him to death for words spoken *against this holy place*, and now the same thing is laid to his charge. He that was then made use of as the tool is now set up as the butt of Jewish rage and malice.

(2.) They charge upon him bad practices. To confirm their charge against him, as teaching people against this holy place, they charge it upon him that he had himself polluted it, and by an overt-act showed his contempt of it, and a design to make it common. He has brought Gentiles also into the temple, into the inner court of the temple, which none that were uncircumcised were admitted, under any pretence, to come into; there was written upon the wall that enclosed this inner court, in Greek and Latin, *It is a capital crime for strangers to enter*.—Joseph. *Antiq.* lib. xv. cap. 14. Paul was himself a Jew, and had right to enter into the court of the Jews. And they, seeing some with him there that joined with him in his devotions, concluded that Trophimus an Ephesian, who was a Gentile, was one of them. Why? Did they see him there? Truly no; but they had seen him with Paul in the streets of the city, which was no crime at all, and therefore they affirm that he was with Paul in the inner court of the temple, which was a heinous crime. They had seen him with him in the city, and therefore they supposed that Paul had brought him with him into the temple,

which was utterly false. See here, [1.] Innocency is no fence against calumny and false accusation. It is no new thing for those that mean honestly, and act regularly, to have things laid to their charge which they know not, nor ever thought of. [2.] *Evil men dig up mischief*, and go far to seek proofs of their false accusations, as they did here, who, because they saw a Gentile with Paul in the city, will thence infer that he was with him in the temple. This was a strained innuendo indeed, yet by such unjust and groundless suggestions have wicked men thought to justify themselves in the most barbarous outrages committed upon the *excellent ones of the earth*. [3.] It is common for malicious people to improve that against those that are wise and good with which they thought to have obliged them and ingratiated themselves with them. Paul thought to recommend himself to their good opinion by going into the temple, and thence they take an occasion to accuse him. If he had kept further off them, he had not been so maligned by them. This is the genius of ill-nature; *for my love, they are my adversaries*, Ps. cix. 4; lxix. 10.

II. We have Paul in danger of being pulled in pieces by the rabble. They will not be at the pains to have him before the high priest, or the sanhedrim; that is a round-about way: the execution shall be of a piece with the prosecution, all unjust and irregular. They cannot prove the crime upon him, and therefore dare not bring him upon a fair trial; nay, so greedily do they thirst after his blood that they have no patience to proceed against him by a due course of law, though they were ever so sure to gain their point; and therefore, as those who neither feared God nor regarded man, they resolved to knock him on the head immediately.

1. All the city was in an uproar, v. 30. The people, who though they had little holiness themselves, yet had a mighty veneration for the holy place, when they heard a hue-and-cry from the temple, were up in arms presently, being resolved to stand by that with their lives and fortunes. *All the city was moved*, when they were called to from the temple, *Men of Israel, help*, with as much violence as if the old complaint were revived (Ps. lxix. 1), *O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled*. Just such a zeal the Jews here show for God's temple as the Ephesians did for Diana's temple, when Paul was informed against as an enemy to that (*ch.* xix. 29): *The whole city was full of confusion*. But God does not reckon himself at all honoured by those whose zeal for him transports them to such irregularities, and who, while they pretend to act for him, act in such a brutish barbarous manner.

2. They drew Paul out of the temple, and shut the doors between the outer and inner court of the temple, or perhaps the doors of



the outer court. In dragging him furiously out of the temple, (1.) They showed a real detestation of him as one not fit to be suffered in the temple, nor to worship there, nor to be looked upon as a member of the Jewish nation; as if his sacrifice had been an abomination. (2.) They pretended a veneration for the temple; like that of good Jehoiada, who would not have Athaliah to be slain in the house of the Lord, 2 Kings xi. 15. See how absurd these wicked men were; they condemned Paul for drawing people from the temple, and yet, when he himself was very devoutly worshipping in the temple, they drew him out of it. The officers of the temple shut the doors, either, [1.] Lest Paul should find means to get back and take hold of the horns of the altar, and so protect himself by that sanctuary from their rage. Or rather, [2.] Lest the crowd should by the running in of more to them be thrust back into the temple, and some outrage should be committed, to the profanation of that holy place. Those that made no conscience of doing so ill a thing as the murdering of a good man for well-doing, yet would be thought to scruple doing it in a holy place, or at a holy time: *Not in the temple, as Not on the feast-day.*

3. They went about to kill him (v. 31), for they fell a beating him (v. 32), resolving to beat him to death by blows without number, a punishment which the Jewish doctors allowed in some cases (not at all to the credit of their nation), and called *the beating of the rebels*. Now was Paul, like a lamb, thrown into a den of lions, and made an easy prey to them, and, no doubt, he was still of the same mind as when he said, *I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem*, to die so great a death.

III. We have here Paul rescued out of the hands of his Jewish enemies by a Roman enemy. 1. Tidings were brought of the tumult, and that the mob was up, *to the chief captain of the band*, the governor of the castle, or, whoever he was, the now commander-in-chief of the Roman forces that were quartered in Jerusalem. Somebody that was concerned not for Paul, but for the public peace and safety, gave this information to the colonel, who had always a jealous and watchful eye upon these tumultuous Jews, and he is the man that must be instrumental to save Paul's life, when never a friend he had was capable of doing him any service. 2. The tribune, or chief captain, got his forces together with all possible expedition, and went to suppress the mob: *He took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them.* Now at the feast, as at other such solemn times, the guards were up, and the militia more within call than at other times, and so he had them near at hand, and *he ran down unto the multitude*; for at such times delays are dangerous. Sedition must be crushed at first, lest it grow headstrong. 3. The very sight of the Roman general frightened them from beating Paul; for they

knew they were doing what they could not justify, and were in danger of being called in question for this day's uproar, as the town-clerk told the Ephesians. They were deterred from that by the power of the Romans from which they ought to have been restrained by the justice of God and the dread of his wrath. Note, God often makes the earth to help the woman (Rev. xii. 16), and those to be a protection to his people who yet have no affection for his people; they have only a compassion for sufferers, and are zealous for the public peace. The shepherd makes use even of his dogs for the defence of his sheep. It is Streso's comparison here. See here how these wicked people were frightened away at the very sight of the chief captain; for the king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes. 4. The governor takes him into custody. He rescued him, not out of a concern for him, because he thought him innocent, but out of a concern for justice, because he ought not to be put to death without trial; and because he knew not how dangerous the consequence might be to the Roman government if such tumultuous proceedings were not timely suppressed, nor what such an outrageous people might do if once they knew their own strength: he therefore takes Paul out of the hands of the mob into the hands of the law (v. 33): *He took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains*, that the people might be satisfied he did not intend to discharge him, but to examine him, *for he demanded of those who were so eager against him who he was, and what he had done.* This violent taking of him out of the hands of the multitude, though there was all the reason in the world for it, yet they laid to the charge of the chief captain as his crime (ch. xxiv. 7): *The chief captain Lysias came with great violence, and took him out of our hands*, which refers to this rescue as appears by comparing ch. xxiii. 27, 28, where the chief captain gives an account of it to Felix.

IV. The provision which the chief captain made, with much ado, to bring Paul to speak for himself. One had almost as good enter into a struggle with the winds and the waves, as with such a mob as was here got together, and yet Paul made a shift to get liberty of speech among them.

1. There was no knowing the sense of the people; for when the chief captain enquired concerning Paul, having perhaps never heard of his name before (such strangers were the great ones to the excellent ones of the earth, and affected to be so), *some cried one thing, and some another*, among the multitude; so that it was impossible for the chief captain to know their mind, when really they knew not either one another's mind or their own, when every one pretended to give the sense of the whole body. Those that will hearken to the clamours of the multitude will know nothing for a certainty, any more than the builders of Babel, when their tongues were confounded.



2. There was no quelling the rage and fury of the people; for when the chief captain commanded that Paul should be carried into the castle, the tower of Antonia, where the Roman soldiers kept garrison, near the temple, the soldiers themselves had much ado to get him safely thither out of the noise, the people were so violent (v. 35): *When he came upon the stairs, leading up to the castle, the soldiers were forced to take him up in their arms, and carry him (which they might easily do, for he was a little man, and his bodily presence weak), to keep him from the people, who would have pulled him limb from limb if they could. When they could not reach him with their cruel hands, they followed him with their sharp arrows, even bitter words: They followed, crying, Away with him, v. 36.* See how the most excellent persons and things are often run down by a popular clamour. Christ himself was so, with, *Crucify him, crucify him*, though they could not say what evil he had done. *Take him out of the land of the living* (so the ancients expound it), chase him out of the world.

3. Paul at length begged leave of the chief captain to speak to him (v. 37): *As he was to be led into the castle, with a great deal of calmness and composedness in himself, and a great deal of mildness and deference to those about him, he said unto the chief captain, "May I speak unto thee?" Will it be no offence, nor construed as a breach of rule, if I give thee some account of myself, since my persecutors can give no account of me?"* What a humble modest question was this! Paul knew how to speak to the greatest of men, and had many a time spoken to his betters, yet he humbly begs leave to speak to this commander, and will not speak till he has obtained leave: *May I speak unto thee?*

4. The chief captain tells him what notion he had of him: *Canst thou speak Greek?* I am surprised to hear thee speak a learned language; for, *Art not thou that Egyptian who made an uproar?* The Jews made the uproar, and then would have it thought that Paul had given them occasion for it, by beginning first; for probably some of them whispered this in the ear of the chief captain. See what false mistaken notions of good people and good ministers many run away with, and will not be at the pains to have the mistake rectified. It seems, there had lately been an insurrection somewhere in that country, headed by an Egyptian, who took on him to be a prophet. Josephus mentions is story, that "an Egyptian raised a seditious party, promised to show them the fall of the walls of Jerusalem from the mount of Olives, and that they should enter the city upon the ruins." The captain here says that *he led out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers—desperadoes, banditti, raparees, cut-throats.* What a degeneracy was there in the Jewish nation, when there were found there so many that had

such a character, and could be drawn into such an attempt upon the public peace! But Josephus says that "Felix the Roman president went out against them, killed four hundred, and took two hundred prisoners, and the rest were dispersed."—*Antiq. xx. 6. De Bello Jud. ii. 12.* And Eusebius speaks of it, *Hist. ii. 20.* It happened in the thirtieth year of Claudius, a little before those days, about three years ago. The ringleader of this rebellion, it seems, had made his escape, and the chief captain concluded that one who lay under so great an odium as Paul seemed to lie under, and against whom there was so great an outcry, could not be a criminal of less figure than this Egyptian. See how good men are exposed to ill-will by mistake.

5. Paul rectifies his mistake concerning him, by informing him particularly what he was; not such a vagabond, a scoundrel, a rake, as that Egyptian, who could give no good account of himself. No: *I am a man who is a Jew originally, and no Egyptian—a Jew both by nation and religion; I am of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, of honest parents and a liberal education (Tarsus was a university), and, besides that, a citizen of no mean city.* Whether he means Tarsus or Rome is not certain; they were neither of them mean cities, and he was a freeman of both. Though the chief captain had put him under such an invidious suspicion, that he was that Egyptian, he kept his temper, did not break out into any passionate exclamations against the times he lived in or the men he had to do with, did not render railing for railing, but mildly denied the charge, and owned what he was.

6. He humbly desired a permission from the chief captain, whose prisoner he now was, to speak to the people. He does not demand it as a debt, though he might have done so, but sues for it as a favour, which he will be thankful for: *I beseech thee, suffer me to speak to the people.* The chief captain rescued him with no other design than to give him a fair hearing. Now, to show that his cause needs no art to give it a plausible colour, he desires he may have leave immediately to defend himself; for it needed no more than to be set in a true light; nor did he depend only on the goodness of his cause, but upon the goodness and fidelity of his patron, and that promise of his to all his advocates, *that it should be given them in that same hour what they should speak.*

7. He obtained leave to plead his own cause, for he needed not to have counsel assigned him, when the Spirit of the Father was ready to dictate to him, *Matt. x. 20. The chief captain gave him license (v. 40),* so that now he could speak with a good grace, and with the more courage; he had, I will not say that favour, but that justice, done him by the chief captain, which he could not obtain from his countrymen the Jews; for they



would not hear him, but the captain would, though it were but to satisfy his curiosity. This licence being obtained, (1.) The people were attentive to hear: *Paul stood on the stairs*, which gave a little man like Zaccheus some advantage, and consequently some boldness, in delivering himself. A sorry pulpit it was, and yet better than none; it served the purpose, though it was not, like Ezra's pulpit of wood, made for the purpose. There he *beckoned with the hand unto the people*, made signs to them to be quiet and to have a little patience, for he had something to say to them; and so far he gained his point that every one cried hush to his neighbour, and there was made a profound silence. Probably the chief captain also intimidated his charge to all manner of people to keep silence; if the people were not required to give audience, it was to no purpose at all that Paul was allowed to speak. When the cause of Christ and his gospel is to be pleaded, there ought to be a great silence, that we may give the more earnest heed, and all little enough. (2.) Paul addressed himself to speak, well assured that he was serving the interest of Christ's kingdom as truly and effectually as if he had been preaching in the synagogue: he *spoke unto them in the Hebrew tongue*, that is, in their own vulgar tongue, which was the language of their country, to which he hereby owned not only an abiding relation, but an abiding respect.

## CHAP. XXII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had Paul bound, according to Agabus's prophecy of the hard usage he should receive from the Jews at Jerusalem; yet he had his tongue set at liberty, by the permission the chief captain gave him to speak for himself; and so intent he is upon using that liberty of speech which is allowed him, to the honour of Christ and the service of his interest, that he forgets the bonds he is in, makes no mention of them, but speaks of the great things Christ had done for him with as much ease and cheerfulness as if nothing had been done to ruffle him or put him into disorder. We have here, I. His address to the people, and their attention to it, ver. 1, 2. II. The account he gives of himself. 1. What a bigoted Jew he had been in the beginning of his time, ver. 3-5. 2. How he was miraculously converted and brought over to the faith of Christ, ver. 6-11. 3. How he was confirmed and baptized by the ministry of Ananias, ver. 12-16. 4. How he was afterwards called, by an immediate warrant from heaven, to be the apostle of the Gentiles, ver. 17-21. III. The interruption given him upon this by the rabble, who could not bear to hear any thing said in favour of the Gentiles, and the violent passion they flew into upon it, ver. 22, 23. IV. Paul's second rescue out of the hands of the rabble, and the further course which the chief captain took to find out the true reason of this mighty clamour against Paul, ver. 24, 25. V. Paul's pleading his privilege as a Roman citizen, by which he was exempted from this barbarous method of inquisition, ver. 26-29. VI. The chief captain's removing the cause into the high priest's court, and Paul's appearing there, ver. 30.

**M**EN, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make now unto you.* 2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

Paul had, in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, gained a great point, by commanding so profound a silence after so loud a clamour. Now here observe,

I. With what an admirable composure and presence of mind he addresses himself to speak. Never was poor man set upon in

a more tumultuous manner, nor with more rage and fury; and yet, in what he said, 1. There appears no fright, but his mind is sedate and composed. Thus he makes his own words good, *None of these things move me*; and David's (Ps. iii. 6), *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.* 2. There appears no passion. Though the suggestions against him were all frivolous and unjust, though it would have vexed any man alive to be charged with profaning the temple just then when he was contriving and designing to show his respect to it, yet he breaks out into no angry expressions, but is *led as a lamb to the slaughter.*

II. What respectful titles he gives even to those who thus abused him, and how humbly he craves their attention: "*Men, brethren, and fathers, v. 1. To you, O men, I call*; men, that should hear reason, and be ruled by it; men, from whom one may expect humanity. You, *brethren* of the common people; you, *fathers* of the priests." Thus he lets them know that he was one of them, and had not renounced his relation to the Jewish nation, but still had a kindness and concern for it. Note, Though we must not give flattering titles to any, yet we ought to give titles of due respect to all; and those we would do good to we should endeavour not to provoke. Though he was rescued out of their hands, and was taken under the protection of the chief captain, yet he does not fall foul upon them, with, *Hear now, you rebels*; but compliments them with, *Men, brethren, and fathers.* And observe, he does not exhibit a charge against them, does not recriminate, Hear now what I have to say against you, but, Hear now what I have to say for myself: *Hear you my defence*; a just and reasonable request, for every man that is accused has a right to answer for himself, and has not justice done him if his answer be not patiently and impartially heard.

III. The language he spoke in, which recommended what he said to the auditory: *He spoke in the Hebrew tongue*, that is, the vulgar language of the Jews, which, at this time, was not the pure Old-Testament Hebrew, but the Syriac, a dialect of the Hebrew, or rather a corruption of it, as the Italian of the Latin. However, 1. It showed his continued respect to his countrymen, the Jews. Though he had conversed so much with the Gentiles, yet he still retained the Jews' language, and could talk it with ease; by this it appears he is a Jew, *for his speech betrayeth him.* 2. What he said was the more generally understood, for that was the language every body spoke, and therefore to speak in that language was indeed to appeal to the people, by which he might have somewhat to insinuate into their affections; and therefore, *when they heard that he spoke in the Hebrew tongue, they kept the more silence.* How can it be thought people should give any atten-



tion to that which is spoken to them in a language they do not understand? The chief captain was surprised to hear him speak Greek (*ch. xxi. 37*), the Jews were surprised to hear him speak Hebrew, and both therefore think the better of him. But how would they have been surprised if they had enquired, as they ought to have done, and had found in what variety of tongues *the Spirit gave him utterance!* 1 Cor. xiv. 18, *I speak with tongues more than you all.* But the truth is, many wise and good men are therefore slighted only because they are not known.

3 I am verily a man *which am a Jew*, born in Tarsus, *a city in Cilicia*, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and* taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. 4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. 5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. 6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. 10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. 11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus, 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13

Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. 17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. 19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

Paul here gives such an account of himself as might serve not only to satisfy the chief captain that he was not that Egyptian he took him to be, but the Jews also that he was not that enemy to their church and nation, to their law and temple, they took him to be, and that what he did in preaching Christ, and particularly in preaching him to the Gentiles, he did by a divine commission. He here gives them to understand,

I. What his extraction and education were. 1. That he was one of their own nation, *of the stock of Israel, of the seed of Abraham, a Hebrew of the Hebrews*, not of any obscure family, or a renegado of some other nation. "No, I am verily a man who is a Jew, *ἀνὴρ Ἰουδαῖος*—a Jewish man; I am a man, and therefore ought not to be treated as a beast; a man who is a Jew, not a barbarian; I am a sincere friend to your nation, for I am one of it, and should defile my own nest if I should unjustly derogate from the honour of your law and your temple." 2. That he was born in a creditable reputable place, *in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia*, and was by his birth a freeman of that city. He was not born in servitude, as some of the Jews of the dispersion, it is likely, were; but he was a gentleman born, and perhaps could produce his certifi-



cate of his freedom in that ancient and honourable city. This was, indeed, but a small matter to make any boast of, and yet it was needful to be mentioned at this time to those who insolently trampled upon him, as if he were to be ranked with the children of fools, yea, the children of base men, Job xxx. 8. 3. That he had a learned and liberal education. He was not only a Jew, and a gentleman, but a scholar. He was brought up in Jerusalem, the principal seat of the Jewish learning, and at the feet of Gamaliel, whom they all knew to be an eminent doctor of the Jewish law, of which Paul was designed to be himself a teacher; and therefore he could not be ignorant of their law, nor be thought to slight it because he did not know it. His parents had brought him very young to this city, designing him for a Pharisee; and some think his being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel intimates, not only that he was one of his pupils, but that he was, above any other, diligent and constant in attending his lectures, observant of him, and obsequious to him, in all he said, as *Mary*, that sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. 4. That he was in his early days a very forward and eminent professor of the Jews' religion; his studies and learning were all directed that way. So far was he from being principled in his youth with any disaffection to the religious usages of the Jews that there was not a young man among them who had a greater and more entire veneration for them than he had, was more strict in observing them himself, or more hot in enforcing them upon others. (1.) He was an intelligent professor of their religion, and had a clear head. He minded his business at Gamaliel's feet, and was there taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers. What departures he had made from the law were not owing to any confused or mistaken notions of it, for he understood it to a nicety, *κατὰ ἀκριβειαν*—according to the most accurate and exact method. He was not trained up in the principles of the latitudinarians, had nothing in him of a Sadducee, but was of that sect that was most studious in the law, kept most close to it, and, to make it more strict than it was, added to it the traditions of the elders, the law of the fathers, the law which was given to them, and which they gave to their children, and so it was handed down to us. Paul had as great a value for antiquity, and tradition, and the authority of the church, as any of them had; and there was never a Jew of them all that understood his religion better than Paul did, or could better give an account of it or a reason for it. (2.) He was an active professor of their religion, and had a warm heart: *I was zealous towards God, as you all are this day*. Many that are very well skilled in the theory of religion are willing to leave the practice of it to others, but Paul was as much a zealot as a rabbi. He was zealous against every thing that the

law prohibited, and for every thing that the law enjoined; and this was zeal towards God, because he thought it was for the honour of God and the service of his interests; and here he compliments his hearers with a candid and charitable opinion of them, *that they all were this day zealous towards God; he bears them record* (Rom. x. 2) *that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*. In hating him, and casting him out, they said, *Let the Lord be glorified* (Isa. lxvi. 5), and, though this did by no means justify their rage, yet it enabled those that prayed, *Father, forgive them*, to plead, as Christ did, *For they know not what they do*. And when Paul owns that he had been zealous for God in the law of Moses, *as they were this day*, he intimates his hope that they might be zealous for God, in Christ, as he was this day.

II. What a fiery furious persecutor he had been of the Christian religion in the beginning of his time, v. 4, 5. He mentions this to make it the more plainly and evidently to appear that the change which was wrought upon him, when he was converted to the Christian faith, was purely the effect of a divine power; for he was so far from having any previous inclinations to it, or favourable opinions of it, that immediately before that sudden change was wrought in him he had the utmost antipathy imaginable to Christianity, and was filled with rage against it to the last degree. And perhaps he mentions it to justify God in his present trouble; how unrighteous soever those were that persecuted him, God was righteous, who permitted them to do it, for time was when he was a persecutor; and he may have a further view in it to invite and encourage those people to repent, for he himself had been a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and yet obtained mercy. Let us view Paul's picture of himself when he was a persecutor. 1. He hated Christianity with a mortal enmity: *I persecuted this way unto the death*, that is, "Those that walked in this way I aimed, if possible, to be the death of." He breathed out slaughter against them, ch. ix. 1. When they were put to death, he gave his voice against them, ch. xxvi. 10. Nay, he persecuted not only those that walked in this way, but the way itself, Christianity, which was branded as a by-way, a sect; he aimed to persecute this to the death, to be the ruin of this religion. He persecuted it to the death, that is, he could have been willing himself to die in his opposition to Christianity, so some understand it. He would contentedly have lost his life, and would have thought it well laid out, in defence of the laws and traditions of the fathers. 2. He did all he could to frighten people from this way, and out of it, by binding and delivering into prison both men and women; he filled the jails with Christians. Now that he himself was bound, he lays a particular stress upon this part of his charge against himself, that he had bound the Christians,



and carried them to prison; he likewise reflects upon it with a special regret that he had imprisoned not only the men, but the women, the weaker sex, who ought to be treated with particular tenderness and compassion. 3. He was employed by the great sanhedrim, the high priest, and all the estate of the elders, as an agent for them, in suppressing this new sect; so much had he already signalized himself for his zeal against it, v. 5. The high priest can witness for him that he was ready to be employed in any service against the Christians. When they heard that many of the Jews at Damascus had embraced the Christian faith, to deter others from doing the like they resolved to proceed against them with the utmost severity, and could not think of a fitter person to be employed in that business, nor one more likely to go through with it, than Paul. They therefore sent him, and letters by him, to the Jews at Damascus, here called *the brethren*, because they all descended from one common stock, and were of one family in religion too, ordering them to be assisting to Paul in seizing those among them that had turned Christians, and bringing them up prisoners to Jerusalem, in order to their being punished as deserters from the faith and worship of the God of Israel; and so might either be compelled to retract, or be put to death for a terror to others. Thus did Saul make *havoc of the church*, and was in a fair way, if he had gone on awhile, to ruin it, and root it out. "Such a one," says Paul, "I was at first, just such as you now are. I know the heart of a persecutor, and therefore pity you, and pray that you may know the heart of a convert, as God soon made me to do. *And who was I that I could withstand God?*"

III. In what manner he was converted, and made what he now was. It was not from any natural or external causes; he did not change his religion from an affectation of novelty, for he was then as well affected to antiquity as he used to be; nor did it arise from discontent because he was disappointed in his preferment, for he was now, more than ever, in the way of preferment in the Jewish church; much less could it arise from covetousness, or ambition, or any hope of mending his fortune in the world by turning Christian, for it was to expose himself to all manner of disgrace and trouble; nor had he any conversation with the apostles or any other Christians, by whose subtlety and sophistry he might be thought to have been wheedled into this change. No, it was the Lord's doing, and the circumstances of the doing of it were enough to justify him in the change, to all those who believe there is a supernatural power; and none can condemn him for it, without reflecting upon that divine energy by which he was herein overruled. He relates the story of his conversion here very particularly, as we had it before (*ch. ix.*),

aiming to show that it was purely the act of God. 1. He was as fully bent upon persecuting the Christians just before Christ arrested him as ever. *He made his journey, and was come nigh to Damascus* (v. 6), and had no other thought than to execute the cruel design he was sent upon; he was not conscious of the least compassionate relents towards the poor Christians, but still represented them to himself as heretics, schismatics, and dangerous enemies both to church and state. 2. It was a *light from heaven* that first startled him, a *great light*, which *shone suddenly round about him*, and the Jews knew that God is light, and his angels angels of light, and that such a light as this shining at noon, and therefore exceeding that of the sun, must be from God. Had it shone in upon him into some private room, there might have been a cheat in it, but it shone upon him in the open road, at high noon, and so strongly *that it struck him to the ground* (v. 7), and all *that were with him*, *ch. xxvi.* 14. They could not deny but that surely the Lord was in this light. 3. It was a *voice from heaven* that first begat in him awful thoughts of Jesus Christ, of whom before he had had nothing but hateful spiteful thoughts. The voice called to him by name, to distinguish him from *those that journeyed with him*, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* And when he asked, *Who art thou, Lord?* it was answered, *I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest*, v. 8. By which it appeared that this Jesus of Nazareth, whom they also were now persecuting, was one that spoke from heaven, and they knew it was dangerous resisting one that did so, *Heb. xii. 25.* 4. Lest it should be objected, "How came this light and voice to work such a change upon him, and not upon those that journeyed with him?" (though, it is very probable, it had a good effect upon them, and that they thereupon became Christians), he observes *that his fellow travellers saw indeed the light, and were afraid* they should be consumed with fire from heaven, their own consciences, perhaps, now telling them that the way they were in was not good, but like Balaam's when he was going to curse Israel, and therefore they might expect to meet an angel with a flaming glittering sword; but, though the light made them afraid, they heard not the voice of him that spoke to Paul, that is, they did not distinctly hear the words. Now faith comes by hearing, and therefore that change was now presently wrought upon him that heard the words, and heard them directed to himself, which was not wrought upon those who only saw the light; and yet it might afterwards be wrought upon them too. 5. He assures them that when he was thus startled he referred himself entirely to a divine guidance; he did not hereupon presently cry out, "Well, I will be a Christian," but, "*What shall I do, Lord?*" Let the same voice from heaven that has stopped me in

the wrong way guide me into the right way, *v. 10.* Lord, tell me what I shall do, and I will do it." And immediately he had directions to go to Damascus, and there he should hear further from him that now spoke to him: "No more needs to be said from heaven, *there it shall be told thee*, by a man like thyself, in the name of him that now speaks to thee, *all things which are appointed for thee to do.*" The extraordinary ways of divine revelation, by visions, and voices, and the appearance of angels, were designed, both in the Old Testament and in the New, only to introduce and establish the ordinary method by the scriptures and a standing ministry, and therefore were generally superseded when these were settled. The angel did not preach to Cornelius himself, but bade him send for Peter; so the voice here tells not Paul what he shall do, but bids him go to Damascus, and there it shall be told him. 6. As a demonstration of the greatness of that light which fastened upon him, he tells them of the immediate effect it had upon his eye-sight (*v. 11*): *I could not see for the glory of that light.* It struck him blind for the present. *Nimium sensibile lædit sensum—Its radiance dazzled him.* Condemned sinners are struck blind, as the Sodomites and Egyptians were, by the power of darkness, and it is a lasting blindness, like that of the unbelieving Jews; but convinced sinners are struck blind, as Paul here was, not by darkness, but by light: they are for the present brought to be at a loss within themselves, but it is in order to their being enlightened, as the putting of clay upon the eyes of the blind man was the designed method of his cure. Those that were with Paul had not the light so directly darted into their faces as Paul had into his, and therefore they were not blinded, as he was; yet, considering the issue, who would not rather have chosen his lot than theirs? They, having their sight, led Paul by the hand into the city. Paul, being a Pharisee, was proud of his spiritual eyesight. The Pharisees said, *Are we blind also?* John ix. 40. Nay, they were confident that they themselves were guides to the blind, and lights to those that were in darkness, Rom. ii. 19. Now Paul was thus struck with bodily blindness to make him sensible of his spiritual blindness, and his mistake concerning himself, when he was *alive without the law*, Rom. vii. 9.

IV. How he was confirmed in the change he had made, and further directed what he should do, by Ananias who lived at Damascus.

Observe, 1. The character here given of Ananias. He was not a man that was any way prejudiced against the Jewish nation or religion, but was himself a devout man according to the law; if not a Jew by birth, yet one that had been proselyted to the Jewish religion, and therefore called a devout man, and thence advanced further to the faith of Christ; and he conducted himself so well that he had a good

report of all the Jews that dwell at Damascus. This was the first Christian that Paul had any friendly communication with, and it was not likely that he should instil into him any such notions as they suspected him to espouse, injurious to the law or to this holy place.

2. The cure immediately wrought by him upon Paul's eyes, which miracle was to confirm Ananias's mission to Paul, and to ratify all that he should afterwards say to him. He came to him (*v. 13*); and, to assure him that he came to him from Christ (the very same who had torn and would heal him, had smitten, but would bind him up, had taken away his sight, but would restore it again, with advantage), he stood by him, and said, *Brother Saul, receive thy sight.* Power went along with this word, and the same hour, immediately, he recovered his sight, and looked up upon him, ready to receive from him the instructions sent by him.

3. The declaration which Ananias makes to him of the favour, the peculiar favour, which the Lord Jesus designed him above any other.

(1.) In the present manifestation of himself to him (*v. 14*): *The God of our fathers has chosen thee.* This powerful call is the result of a particular choice; his calling God the God of our fathers intimates that Ananias was himself a Jew by birth, that observed the law of the fathers, and lived upon the promise made unto the fathers; and he gives a reason why he said *Brother Saul*, when he speaks of God as the God of our fathers: *This God of our fathers has chosen thee that thou shouldst, [1.] Know his will,* the will of his precept that is to be done by thee, the will of his providence that is to be done concerning thee. He hath chosen thee that thou shouldst know it in a more peculiar manner; not of man nor by man, but immediately by the revelation of Christ, Gal. i. 1, 12. Those whom God hath chosen he hath chosen to know his will, and to do it. [2.] *That thou shouldst see that Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of his mouth,* and so shouldst know his will immediately from himself. This was what Paul was, in a particular manner, chosen to above others; it was a distinguishing favour, that he should see Christ here upon earth after his ascension into heaven. Stephen saw him standing at the right hand of God, but Paul saw him standing at his right hand. This honour none had but Paul. Stephen saw him, but we do not find that he heard the voice of his mouth, as Paul did, who says, *he was last of all seen of me, as of one born out of due time*, 1 Cor. xv. 8. Christ is here called *that Just One*; for he is Jesus Christ the righteous, and suffered wrongfully. Observe, Those whom God has chosen to know his will must have an eye to Christ, and must see him, and hear the voice of his mouth; for it is by him that God has made known his will, his good-will to us, and he has said, *Hear you him.*



(2.) In the after-manifestation of himself by him to others (v. 15): "*Thou shalt be his witness, not only a monument of his grace, as a pillar may be, but a witness viva voce—by word of mouth; thou shalt publish his gospel, as that which thou hast experienced the power of, and been delivered into the mould of; thou shalt be his witness unto all men, Gentiles as well as Jews, of what thou hast seen and heard, now at the very first.*" And finding Paul so particularly relating the manner of his conversion in his apologies for himself, here and *ch. xxvi.*, we have reason to think that he frequently related the same narrative in his preaching for the conversion of others; he told them what God had done for his soul, to encourage them to hope that he would do something for their souls.

4. The counsel and encouragement he gave him to join himself to the Lord Jesus by baptism (v. 16): *Arise, and be baptized.* He had in his circumcision been given up to God, but he must now by baptism be given up to God in Christ—must embrace the Christian religion and the privileges of it, in submission to the precepts of it. This must now be done immediately upon his conversion, and so was added to his circumcision: but to the seed of the faithful it comes in the room of it; for it is, as that was to Abraham and his believing seed, *a seal of the righteousness which is by faith.* (1.) The great gospel privilege which by baptism we have sealed to us is the remission of sins: *Be baptized and wash away thy sins*; that is, "Receive the comfort of the pardon of thy sins in and through Jesus Christ and lay hold of his righteousness for that purpose, and receive power against sin for the mortifying of thy corruption;" for our being washed includes our being both justified and sanctified, 1 Cor. vi. 11. Be baptized, and rest not in the sign, but make sure of the thing signified, the putting away of the filth of sin. (2.) The great gospel duty which by our baptism we are bound to is to *call on the name of the Lord, the Lord Jesus*; to acknowledge him to be our Lord and our God, and to apply to him accordingly; to give honour to him, to put all our petitions in his hand. To *call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord* (Son of David, have mercy on us) is the periphrasis of a Christian, 1 Cor. i. 2. We must *wash away our sins, calling on the name of the Lord*; that is, we must seek for the pardon of our sins in Christ's name, and in dependence on him and his righteousness. In prayer, we must not any longer call God the God of Abraham, but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father; in every prayer, our eye must be to Christ. (3.) We must do this quickly. *Why tarriest thou?* Our covenanting with God in Christ is needful work, that must not be deferred. The case is so plain that it is needless to deliberate; and the hazard so great that it is folly to delay. *Why should not that be done at the*

present time that must be done some time, or we are undone?

V. How he was commissioned to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. This was the great thing for which they were so angry at him, and therefore it was requisite he should for this, in a special manner, produce a divine warrant; and here he does it. This commission he did not receive presently upon his conversion, for this was at Jerusalem, whither he did not go till *three years after*, or more (Gal. i. 18); and whether it was then, or afterwards, that he had this vision here spoken of, we are not certain. But, to reconcile them, if possible, to his preaching the gospel among the Gentiles, he tells them, 1. That he received his orders to do it when he was at prayer, begging of God to appoint him his work and to show him the course he should steer; and (which was a circumstance that would have some weight with those he was now speaking to) he was *at prayer in the temple*, which was to be called *a house of prayer for all people*; not only in which all people should pray, but in which all people should be prayed for. Now as Paul's praying in the temple was an evidence, contrary to their malicious suggestion, that he had a veneration for the temple, though he did not make an idol of it as they did; so God's giving him this commission there in the temple was an evidence that the sending him to the Gentiles would be no prejudice to the temple, unless the Jews by their infidelity made it so. Now it would be a great satisfaction to Paul afterwards, in the execution of this commission, to reflect upon it that he received it when he was at prayer. 2. He received it in a vision. He *fell into a trance* (v. 17), his external senses, for the present, locked up; he was in an ecstasy, as when he was *caught up into the third heaven*, and was not at that time sensible whether he was *in the body or out of the body*. In this trance he saw Jesus Christ, not with the eyes of his body, as at his conversion, but represented to the eye of his mind (v. 18): *I saw him saying unto me.* Our eye must be upon Christ when we are receiving the law from his mouth; and we must not only hear him speak, but see him speaking to us. 3. Before Christ gave him a commission to go to the Gentiles, he told him it was to no purpose for him to think of doing any good at Jerusalem; so that they must not blame him, but themselves, if he be sent to the Gentiles. Paul came to Jerusalem full of hopes that, by the grace of God, he might be instrumental to bring those to the faith of Christ who had stood it out against the ministry of the other apostles; and perhaps this was what he was now praying for, that he, having had his education at Jerusalem and being well known there, might be employed in gathering the children of Jerusalem to Christ that were not yet gathered, which he thought he had particular advantages for the doing



of. But Christ crosses the measures he had laid: "*Make haste,*" says he, "*and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem;*" for, though thou thinkest thyself more likely to work upon them than others, thou wilt find they are more prejudiced against thee than against any other, and therefore *will not receive thy testimony concerning me.*" As God knows before who will receive the gospel, so he knows who will reject it. 4. Paul, notwithstanding this, renewed his petition that he might be employed at Jerusalem, because they knew, better than any did, what he had been before his conversion, and therefore must ascribe so great a change in him to the power of almighty grace, and consequently give the greater regard to his testimony; thus he reasoned, both with himself and with the Lord, and thought he reasoned justly (v. 19, 20): "*Lord,*" says he, "*they know that I was once of their mind, that I was as bitter an enemy as any of them to such as believed on thee, that I irritated the civil power against them, and imprisoned them, and turned the edge of the spiritual power against them too, and beat them in every synagogue.*" And therefore they will not impute my preaching Christ to education nor to any prepossession in his favour (as they do that of other ministers), but will the more readily regard what I say because they know I have myself been one of them: particularly in Stephen's case; they know that when he was stoned I was standing by, I was aiding and abetting and *consenting to his death*, and in token of this *kept the clothes of those that stoned him.* Now, "*Lord,*" says he, "*if I appear among them, preaching the doctrine that Stephen preached and suffered for, they will no doubt receive my testimony.*" "*No,*" says Christ to him, "*they will not; but will be more exasperated against thee as a deserter from, than against others whom they look upon only as strangers to, their constitution.*" 5. Paul's petition for a warrant to preach the gospel at Jerusalem is overruled, and he has peremptory orders to go among the Gentiles (v. 21): *Depart, for I will send thee far hence, unto the Gentiles.* Note, God often gives gracious answers to the prayers of his people, not in the thing itself that they pray for, but in something better. Abraham prays, *O that Ishmael may live before thee;* and God hears him for Isaac. So Paul here prays that he may be an instrument of converting souls at Jerusalem: "*No,*" says Christ, "*but thou shalt be employed among the Gentiles, and more shall be the children of the desolate than those of the married wife.*" It is God that appoints his labourers both their day and their place, and it is fit they should acquiesce in his appointment, though it may cross their own inclinations. Paul hankers after Jerusalem: to be a preacher there was the summit of his ambition; but Christ designs him greater preferment. He shall not enter into other men's labours (as the other apostles did, John iv.

38), but shall break up new ground, and *preach the gospel where Christ was not named,* Rom. xv. 20. So often does Providence contrive better for us than we for ourselves; to the guidance of that we must therefore refer ourselves. *He shall choose our inheritance for us.* Observe, Paul shall not go to preach among the Gentiles without a commission: *I will send thee.* And, if Christ send him, his Spirit will go along with him, he will stand by him, will carry him on, and bear him out, and give him to see the fruit of his labours. Let not Paul set his heart upon Judea and Jerusalem, for he must be sent far hence; his call must be quite another way, and his work of another kind. And it might be a mitigation of the offence of this to the Jews that he did not set up a Gentile church in the neighbouring nations; others did this in their immediate vicinity; he was sent to places at a distance, a vast way off, where what he did could not be thought an annoyance to them.

Now, if they would lay all this together, surely they would see that they had no reason to be angry with Paul for preaching among the Gentiles, or construe it as an act of ill-will to his own nation, for he was compelled to it, contrary to his own mind, by an overruling command from heaven.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. 23 And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air, 24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. 25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? 26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. 27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. 28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born. 29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid



after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. 30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* hands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Paul was going on with this account of himself, had shown them his commission to preach among the Gentiles without any peevish reflections upon the Jews, and we may suppose designed next to show how he was afterwards, by a special direction of the Holy Ghost at Antioch, separated to this service, how tender he was of the Jews, how respectful to them, and how careful to give them the precedence in all places whither he came, and to unite Jews and Gentiles in one body; and then to show how wonderfully God had owned him, and what good service had been done to the interest of God's kingdom among men in general, without damage to any of the true interests of the Jewish church in particular. But, whatever he designs to say, they resolve he shall say no more to them: *They gave him audience to this word.* Hitherto they had heard him with patience and some attention. But when he speaks of being sent to the Gentiles, though it was what Christ himself said to him, they cannot bear it, not so much as to hear the Gentiles named, such an enmity had they to them, and such a jealousy of them. Upon the mention of this, they have no manner of patience, but forget all rules of decency and equity; thus were they provoked to jealousy by those that were no people, Rom. x. 19.

Now here we are told how furious and outrageous the people were against Paul, for mentioning the Gentiles as taken into the cognizance of divine grace, and so justifying his preaching among them.

I. They interrupted him, by lifting up their voice, to put him into confusion, and that nobody might hear a word he said. Galled consciences kick at the least touch; and those who are resolved not to be ruled by reason commonly resolve not to hear it if they can help it. And the spirit of enmity against the gospel of Christ commonly shows itself in silencing the ministers of Christ and his gospel, and stopping their mouths, as the Jews did Paul's here. Their fathers had said to the best of seers, *See not, Isa. xxx. 10.* And so they to the best of speakers, *Speak not. Forbear, wherefore shouldst thou be smitten? 2 Chron. xxv. 16.*

II. They clamoured against him as one that was unworthy of life, much more of liberty. Without weighing the arguments he had urged in his own defence, or offering to make any answer to them, they cried out with a confused noise, "*Away with such a*

*fellow as this from the earth,* who pretends to have a commission to preach to the Gentiles; why, *it is not fit that he should live.*" Thus the men that have been the greatest blessings of their age have been represented not only as the burdens of the earth, but the plague of their generation. He that was worthy of the greatest honours of life is condemned as not worthy of life itself. See what different sentiments God and men have of good men, and yet they both agree in this that they are not likely to live long in this world. Paul says of the godly Jews that they were men of *whom the world was not worthy*, Heb. xi. 38. And therefore they must be removed, that the world may be justly punished with the loss of them. The ungodly Jews here say of Paul that it was not fit he should live; and therefore he must be removed, that the world may be eased of the burden of him, as of the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 10.

III. They went stark mad against Paul, and against the chief captain for not killing him immediately at their request, or throwing him as a prey into their teeth, that they might devour him (v. 23); as men whose reason was quite lost in passion, they cried out like roaring lions or raging bears, and howled like the evening wolves; they *cast off their clothes* with fury and violence, as much as to say that thus they would tear him if they could but come at him. Or, rather, they thus showed how ready they were to stone him; those that stoned Stephen threw off their clothes, v. 20. Or, they *rent their clothes*, as if he had spoken blasphemy; and *threw dust into the air*, in detestation of it; or signifying how ready they were to throw stones at Paul, if the chief captain would have permitted them. But why should we go about to give a reason for these expressions of fury, which they themselves could not account for? All they intended was to make the chief captain sensible how much they were enraged and exasperated at Paul, so that he could not do any thing to gratify them more than to let them have their will against him.

IV. The chief captain took care for his safety, by ordering him to be brought into the castle, v. 24. A prison sometimes has been a protection to good men from popular rage. Paul's hour was not yet come, he had not finished his testimony, and therefore God raised up one that took care of him, when none of his friends durst appear on his behalf. *Grant not, O Lord, the desire of the wicked.*

V. He ordered him the torture, to force from him a confession of some flagrant crimes which had provoked the people to such an uncommon violence against him. *He ordered that he should be examined by scourging* (as now in some countries by the rack), that *he might know wherefore they cried so against him.* Herein he did not proceed fairly; he should

have singled out some of the clamorous tumultuous complainants, and taken them into the castle as breakers of the peace, and should have examined them, and by scourging too, what they had to lay to the charge of a man that could give so good an account of himself, and did not appear to have done any thing worthy of death or of bonds. It was proper to ask them, but not at all proper to ask Paul, *wherefore they cried so against him*. He could tell that he had given them no just cause to do it; if there were any cause, let them produce it. No man is bound to accuse himself, though he be guilty, much less ought he to be compelled to accuse himself when he is innocent. Surely the chief captain did not know the Jewish nation when he concluded that he must needs have done something very bad whom they cried out against. Had they not just thus cried out against our Lord Jesus, *Crucify him, crucify him*, when they had not one word to say in answer to the judge's question, *Why, what evil has he done?* Is this a fair or just occasion to scourge Paul, that a rude tumultuous mob cry out against him, but cannot tell why or wherefore, and therefore he must be forced to tell?

VI. Paul pleaded his privilege as a Roman citizen, by which he was exempted from all trials and punishments of this nature (v. 25): *As they bound him with thongs, or leathern bands, to the whipping post, as they used to bind the vilest of malefactors in bridewell from whom they would extort a confession, he made no outcry against the injustice of their proceedings against an innocent man, but very mildly let them understand the illegality of their proceedings against him as a citizen of Rome, which he had done once before at Philippi after he had been scourged (ch. xvi. 37), but here he makes use of it for prevention. He said to the centurion that stood by, "You know the law; pray is it lawful for you who are yourselves Romans to scourge a man that is a Roman, and undcondemned?"* The manner of his speaking plainly intimates what a holy security and serenity of mind this good man enjoyed, not disturbed either with anger or fear in the midst of all those indignities that were done him, and the danger he was in. The Romans had a law (it was called *lex Sempronia*), that if any magistrate did chastise or condemn a freeman of Rome, *indicta causa—without hearing him speak for himself, and deliberating upon the whole of his case*, he should be liable to the sentence of the people, who were very jealous of their liberties. It is indeed the privilege of every man not to have wrong done him, except it be proved he has done wrong; as it is of every Englishman by *Magna Charta* not to be dis-seized of his life or freehold, but by a verdict of twelve men of his peers.

VII. The chief captain was surprised at this, and put into a fright. He had taken

Paul to be a vagabond Egyptian, and wondered he could speak Greek (ch. xxi. 37), but is much more surprised now he finds that he is as good a gentleman as himself. How many men of great worth and merit are despised because they are not known, are looked upon and treated as the offscouring of all things, when those that count them so, if they knew their true character, would own them to be of the excellent ones of the earth! The chief captain had centurions, under-officers, attending him, ch. xxi. 32. One of these reports this matter to the chief captain (v. 26): *Take heed what thou doest, for this man is a Roman*, and what indignity is done to him will be construed an offence against the majesty of the Roman people, as they loved to speak. They all knew what a value was put upon this privilege of the Roman citizens. Tully extols it in one of his orations against Verres, *O nomen dulce libertatis, O jus eximium nostræ civitatis! O lex Porcia! O leges Sempronie; facinus est vincere Romanum civem, scelus verberare—O Liberty! I love thy charming name; and these our Porcian and Sempronian laws, how admirable! It is a crime to bind a Roman citizen, but an unpardonable one to beat him*. "Therefore" (says the centurion) "let us look to ourselves; if this man be a Roman, and we do him any indignity, we shall be in danger to lose our commissions at least." Now, 1. The chief captain would be satisfied of the truth of this from his own mouth (v. 27): *"Tell me, art thou a Roman? Art thou entitled to the privileges of a Roman citizen?"* "Yes," says Paul, *"I am;"* and perhaps produced some ticket or instrument which proved it; for otherwise they would scarcely have taken his word. 2. The chief captain very freely compares notes with him upon this matter, and it appears that the privilege Paul had as a Roman citizen was of the two more honourable than the colonel's; for the colonel owns that his was purchased: *"I am a freeman of Rome; but with a great sum obtained I this freedom, it cost me dear, how came you by it?"* "Why truly," says Paul, *"I was free-born."* Some think he became entitled to this freedom by the place of his birth, as a native of Tarsus, a city privileged by the emperor with the same privileges that Rome itself enjoyed; others rather think it was by his father or grandfather having served in the war between Cæsar and Antony, or some other of the civil wars of Rome, and being for some signal piece of service rewarded with a freedom of the city, and so Paul came to be free-born; and here he pleads it for his own preservation, for which end not only we may but we ought to use all lawful means. 3. This put an immediate stop to Paul's trouble. Those that were appointed to examine him by scourging quitted the spot; they departed from him (v. 29), lest they should run themselves into a snare. Nay, and the colonel



himself, though we may suppose him to have a considerable interest, was afraid when he heard he was a Roman, because, though he had not beaten him, yet he had bound him in order to his being beaten. Thus many are restrained from evil practices by the fear of man who would not be restrained from them by the fear of God. See here the benefit of human laws and magistracy, and what reason we have to be thankful to God for them; for even when they have given no countenance nor special protection to God's people and ministers, yet, by the general support of equity and fair dealing between man and man, they have served to check the rage of wicked and unreasonable illegal men, who otherwise would know no bounds, and to say, *Hitherto it shall come, but no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed.* And therefore this service we owe to all in authority, to pray for them, because this benefit we have reason to expect from them, whether we have it or no, as long as we are quiet and peaceable—to live *quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty*, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. 4. The governor, the next day, brought Paul before the sanhedrim, v. 30. He first loosed him from his hands, that those might not pre-judge his cause, and that he might not be charged with having pinioned a Roman citizen, and then summoned the chief priests and all their council to come together to take cognizance of Paul's case, for he found it to be a matter of religion, and therefore looked upon them to be the most proper judges of it. Gallio in this case discharged Paul; finding it to be a matter of their law, he drove the prosecutors from the judgment-seat (*ch. xviii. 16*), and would not concern himself at all in it: but this Roman, who was a military man, kept Paul in custody, and appealed from the rabble to the general assembly. Now, (1.) We may hope that hereby he intended Paul's safety, as thinking, if he were an innocent and inoffensive man, though the multitude might be incensed against him, yet the chief priests and elders would do him justice, and clear him; for they were, or should be, men of learning and consideration, and their court governed by rules of equity. When the prophet could find no good among the poorer sort of people, he concluded that it was because they *knew not the way of the Lord, nor the judgments of their God*, and promised himself that he should speed better among the great men, as the chief captain here did, but soon found himself disappointed there: these have *altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds*, Jer. v. 4, 5. But, (2.) That which he is here said to aim at is the gratifying of his own curiosity: He *would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews*. Had he sent for Paul to his own chamber, and talked freely with him, he might soon have learned from him that which would have done more than satisfy his enquiry, and which might have per-

suaded him to be a Christian. But it is too common for great men to affect to set that at a distance from them which might awaken their consciences, and to desire to have no more of the knowledge of God's ways than may serve them to talk of.

## CHAP. XXIII.

The close of the foregoing chapter left Paul in the high priest's court, into which the chief captain (whether to his advantage or no I know not) had removed his cause from the mob; and, if his enemies act there against him with less noise, yet it is with more subtlety. Now here we have, I. Paul's protestation of his own integrity, and of a civil respect to the high priest, however he had upon a sudden spoken warmly to him, and justly, ver. 1-3. II. Paul's prudent contrivance to get himself clear of them, by setting the Pharisees and Sadducees at variance one with another, ver. 6-9. III. The governor's reasonable interposal to rescue him out of their hands likewise, ver. 10. IV. Christ's more comfortable appearing to him, to animate him against those difficulties that lay before him, and to tell him what he must expect, ver. 11. V. A bloody conspiracy of some desperate Jews to kill Paul, and their drawing in the chief priests and the elders to be aiders and abettors with them in it, ver. 12-15. VI. The discovery of this conspiracy to Paul, and by him to the chief captain, who perceived so much of their inveterate malice against Paul that he had reason enough to believe the truth of it, ver. 16-22. VII. The chief captain's care of Paul's safety, by which he prevented the execution of the design; he sent him away immediately under a strong guard from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, which was now the residence of Felix, the Roman governor, and there he safely arrived, ver. 23-35.

AND Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. 3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? 4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? 5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Perhaps when Paul was brought, as he often was (*corpus cum causa—the person and the cause together*), before heathen magistrates and councils, where he and his cause were slighted, because not at all understood, he thought, if he were brought before the sanhedrim at Jerusalem, he should be able to deal with them to some good purpose, and yet we do not find that he works at all upon them. Here we have,

I. Paul's protestation of his own integrity. Whether the chief priest put any question to him, or the chief captain made any representation of his case to the court, we are not told but Paul appeared here,

1. With a good courage. He was not at all put out of countenance upon his being brought before such an august assembly, for which in his youth he had conceived such a veneration; nor did he fear their calling him to an account about the letters they gave him to Damascus, to persecute the Christian.



there, though (for aught we know) this was the first time he had ever seen them since; but *he earnestly beheld the council*. When Stephen was brought before them, they thought to have faced him down, but could not, such was his holy confidence; they *looked stedfastly on him, and his face was as that of an angel*, ch. vi. 15. Now that Paul was brought before them he thought to have faced them down, but could not, such was their wicked impudence. However, now was fulfilled in him what God promised to Ezekiel (ch. iii. 8, 9): *I have made thy face strong against their faces; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks*.

2. With a good conscience, and that gave him a good courage.

—Hic mnrus athenus esto,  
Nil conscire sibi

Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,  
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.

He said, "*Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day*. However I may be reproached, my heart does not reproach me, but witnesses for me." (1.) He had always been a man inclined to religion; he never was a man that lived at large, but always put a difference between moral good and evil; even in his unregenerate state, he was, *as touching the righteousness that was in the law, blameless*. He was no unthinking man, who never considered what he did, no designing man, who cared not what he did, so he could but compass his own ends. (2.) Even when he persecuted the church of God, he thought he ought to do it, and that he did God service in it. Though his conscience was misinformed, yet he acted according to the dictates of it. See ch. xxvi. 9. (3.) He seems rather to speak of the time since his conversion, since he left the service of the high priest, and fell under their displeasure for so doing; he does not say, *From my beginning until this day*; but, "*All the time in which you have looked upon me as a deserter, an apostate, and an enemy to your church, even to this day, I have lived in all good conscience before God*: whatever you may think of me, I have in every thing approved myself to God, and lived honestly," Heb. xiii. 18. He had aimed at nothing but to please God and do his duty, in those things for which they were so incensed against him; in all he had done towards the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, and the setting of it up among the Gentiles, he had acted conscientiously. See here the character of an honest man. [1.] He sets God before him, and lives as in his sight, and under his eyes, and with an eye to him. *Walk before me, and be thou upright*. [2.] He makes conscience of what he says and does, and, though he may be under some mistakes, yet, according to the best of his knowledge, he abstains from that which is evil and cleaves to that which is good. [3.] He is universally

conscientious; and those that are not so are not at all truly conscientious; is so in *all manner of conversation*: "*I have lived in all good conscience; have had my whole conversation under the direction and dominion of conscience*." [4.] He continues so, and perseveres in it: "*I have lived so until this day*." Whatever changes pass over him, he is still the same, strictly conscientious. And those who thus live in all good conscience before God may, like Paul here, *lift up their face without spot*; and, if their hearts condemn them not, may have confidence both towards God and man, as Job had when he *still held fast his integrity*, and Paul himself, whose rejoicing was this, the testimony of his conscience.

II. The outrage of which Ananias the high priest was guilty: he *commanded those that stood by*, the headles that attended the court, *to smite him on the mouth* (v. 2), to give him a dash on the teeth, either with a hand or with a rod. Our Lord Jesus was thus spitefully used in this court, by one of the servants (John xviii. 22), as was foretold, Mic. v. 1, *They shall smite the Judge of Israel upon the cheek*. But here was an order of court for the doing of it, and, it is likely, it was done. 1. The high priest was highly offended at Paul; some think, because he looked so boldly and earnestly at the council, as if he would face them down; others because he did not address himself particularly to him as president, with some title of honour and respect, but spoke freely and familiarly to them all, as men and brethren. His protestation of his integrity was provocation enough to one who was resolved to run him down and make him odious. When he could charge him with no crime, he thought it was crime enough that he asserted his own innocence. 2. In his rage he ordered him to be smitten, so to put disgrace upon him, and to be smitten on the mouth, as having offended with his lips, and in token of his enjoining him silence. This brutish and barbarous method he had recourse to when he *could not answer the wisdom and spirit wherewith he spoke*. Thus Zedekiah smote Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 24), and Pashur smote Jeremiah (Jer. xx. 2), when they spoke in the name of the Lord. If therefore we see such indignities done to good men, nay, if they be done to us for well doing and well saying, we must not think it strange; Christ will give those the *kisses of his mouth* (Cant. i. 2) who for his sake receive blows on the mouth. And though it may be expected that, as Solomon says, *every man should kiss his lips that giveth a right answer* (Prov. xxiv. 26), yet we often see the contrary.

III. The denunciation of the wrath of God against the high priest for this *wickedness in the place of judgment* (Eccl. iii. 16): it agrees with what follows there, v. 17, with which Solomon comforted himself (*I said in my heart, God*



*shall judge the righteous and the wicked*) : *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall*, v. 3. Paul did not speak this in any sinful heat or passion, but in a holy zeal against the high priest's abuse of his power, and with something of a prophetic spirit, not at all with a spirit of revenge. 1. He gives him his due character: *Thou whited wall*; that is, thou hypocrite—a mud-wall, trash and dirt and rubbish underneath, but plastered over, or white-washed. It is the same comparison in effect with that of Christ, when he compares the Pharisees to whited sepulchres, Matt. xxiii. 27. Those that daubed with untempered mortar failed not to daub themselves over with something that made them look not only clean, but gay. 2. He reads him his just doom: "*God shall smite thee*, shall bring upon thee his sore judgments, especially spiritual judgments. Grotius thinks this was fulfilled soon after, in his removal from the office of the high priest, either by death or deprivation, for he finds another in that office a little while after this; probably he was smitten by some sudden stroke of divine vengeance. Jeroboam's hand was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet. 3. He assigns a good reason for that doom: "*For sittest thou there as president in the supreme judicature of the church, pretending to judge me after the law, to convict and condemn me by the law, and yet commandest me to be smitten before any crime is proved upon me, which is contrary to the law?*" No man must be beaten unless he be *worthy to be beaten*, Deut. xxv. 2. It is against all law, human and divine, natural and positive, to hinder a man from making his defence, and to condemn him unheard. When Paul was beaten by the rabble, he could say, *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do*; but it is inexcusable in a high priest that is appointed to judge according to the law.

IV. The offence which was taken at this bold word of Paul's (v. 4): *Those that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?* It is a probable conjecture that those who blamed Paul for what he said were believing Jews, who were zealous for the law, and consequently for the honour of the high priest, and therefore took it ill that Paul should thus reflect upon him, and checked him for it. See here then, 1. What a hard game Paul had to play, when his enemies were abusive to him, and his friends were so far from standing by him, and appearing for him, that they were ready to find fault with his management. 2. How apt even the disciples of Christ themselves are to overvalue outward pomp and power. As because the temple had been God's temple, and a magnificent structure, there were those who followed Christ that could not bear to have any thing said that threatened the destruction of it; so because the high priest had been God's high priest, and was a man that made a figure, though he was an inveterate enemy to

Christianity, yet these were disgusted at Paul for giving him his due.

V. The excuse that Paul made for what he had said, because he found it was a stumbling-block to his weak brethren, and might prejudice them against him in other things. These Jewish Christians, though weak, yet were brethren, so he calls them here, and, in consideration of that, is almost ready to recal his words; for *who is offended*, saith he, *and I burn not?* 2 Cor. xi. 29. His fixed resolution was rather to abridge himself in the use of his Christian liberty than give offence to a weak brother; rather than do this, he will *eat no flesh while the world stands*, 1 Cor. viii. 13. And so here though he had taken the liberty to tell the high priest his own, yet, when he found it gave offence, he cried *Peccavi—I have done wrong*. He wished he had not done it; and though he did not beg the high priest's pardon, nor excuse it to him, yet he begs their pardon who took offence at it, because this was not a time to inform them better, nor to say what he could say to justify himself. 1. He excuses it with this, that he did not consider when he said it to whom he spoke (v. 5): *I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest—ὅτις ἦεν*. "I did not just then think of the dignity of his place, or else I would have spoken more respectfully to him." I see not how we can with any probability think that Paul did not know him to be the high priest, for Paul had been seven days in the temple at the time of the feast, where he could not miss of seeing the high priest; and his telling him that *he sat to judge him after the law* shows that he knew who he was; but, says he, I did not consider it. Dr. Whitby puts this sense upon it, that the prophetic impulse that was upon him, and inwardly moved him to say what he did, did not permit him to notice that it was the high priest, lest this law might have restrained him from complying with that impulse; but the Jews acknowledged that prophets might use a liberty in speaking of rulers which others might not, as Isa. i. 10, 23. Or (as he quotes the sense of Grotius and Lightfoot) Paul does not go about to excuse what he had said in the least, but rather to justify it: "I own that God's high priest is not to be reviled, but I do not own this Ananias to be high priest. He is a usurper; he came to the office by bribery and corruption, and the Jewish rabbins say that he who does so is neither a judge nor to be honoured as such." Yet, 2. He takes care that what he had said should not be drawn into a precedent, to the weakening of the obligation of that law in the least: *For it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*. It is for the public good that the honour of magistracy should be supported, and not suffer for the mis-carriages of those who are entrusted with it, and therefore that decorum be observed in

speaking both of and to princes and judges. Even in Job's time it was not thought fit to say to a king, *Thou art wicked, or to princes, You are ungodly*, Job xxxiv. 18. Even when we do well, and suffer for it, we must take it patiently, 1 Pet. ii. 20. Not as if great men may not hear of their faults, and public grievances be complained of by proper persons and in a decent manner, but there must be a particular tenderness for the honour and reputation of those in authority more than of other people, because the law of God requires a particular reverence to be paid to them, as God's viceregents; and it is of dangerous consequence to have those any way countenanced who *despise dominions, and speak evil of dignities*, Jude viii. *Curse not the king, no not in thy thought*, Eccl. x. 20.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. 9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. 10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. 11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

Many are the troubles of the righteous, but some way or other the Lord delivereth them out of them all. Paul owned he had experienced the truth of this in the persecutions he had undergone among the Gentiles (see 2 Tim. iii. 11): *Out of them all the Lord delivered me*. And now he finds that he who has delivered does and will deliver. He that delivered him in the foregoing chapter from the tumult of the people here delivers him from that of the elders.

I. His own prudence and ingenuity stand him in some stead, and contribute much to his escape. Paul's greatest honour, and that upon which he most valued himself, was that he was a Christian, and an apostle of Christ; and all his other honours he despised and made nothing of, in comparison with this, *counting them but dung, that he might win Christ*; and yet he had sometimes occasion to make use of his other honours, and they did him service. His being a citizen of Rome saved him in the foregoing chapter from his being scourged by the chief captain as a vagabond, and here his being a Pharisee saved him from being condemned by the sanhedrim, as an apostate from the faith and worship of the God of Israel. It will consist very well with our willingness to suffer for Christ to use all lawful methods, nay, and arts too, both to prevent suffering and to extricate ourselves out of it. The honest policy Paul used here for his own preservation was to divide his judges, and to set them at variance one with another about him; and, by incensing one part of them more against him, to engage the contrary part for him.

1. The great council was made up of Sadducees and Pharisees, and Paul perceived it. He knew the characters of many of them ever since he lived among them, and saw those among them whom he knew to be Sadducees, and others whom he knew to be Pharisees (v. 6): *One part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees*, and perhaps nearly an equal part. Now these differed very much from one another, and yet they ordinarily agreed well enough to do the business of the council together. (1.) The Pharisees were bigots, zealous for the ceremonies, not only those which God had appointed, but those which were enjoined by the tradition of the elders. They were great sticklers for the authority of the church, and for enforcing obedience to its injunctions, which occasioned many quarrels between them and our Lord Jesus; but at the same time they were very orthodox in the faith of the Jewish church concerning the world of spirits, the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. (2.) The Sadducees were deists—no friends to the scripture, or divine revelation. The books of Moses they admitted as containing a good history and a good law, but had little regard to the other books of the Old Testament; see Matt. xxii. 23. The account here given of these Sadducees is, [1.] That they deny the resurrection; not only the return of the body to life, but a future state of rewards and punishments. They had neither hope of eternal happiness nor dread of eternal misery, nor expectation of any thing on the other side death; and it was upon these principles that they said, *It is in vain to serve God*, and called the proud happy, Mal. iii. 14, 15. [2.] That they denied the existence of angels and



spirits, and allowed of no being but matter. They thought that God himself was corporeal, and had parts and members as we have. When they read of angels in the Old Testament, they supposed them to be messengers that God made and sent on his errands as there was occasion, or that they were impressions on the fancies of those they were sent to, and no real existences—that they were this, or that, or any thing rather than what they were. And, as for the souls of men, they looked upon them to be nothing else but the temperament of the humours of the body, or the animal spirits, but denied their existence in a state of separation from the body, and any difference between the soul of a man and of a beast. These, no doubt, pretended to be free-thinkers, but really thought as meanly, absurdly, and slavishly, as possible. It is strange how men of such corrupt and wicked principles could come into office, and have a place in the great sanhedrim; but many of them were of quality and estate, and they complied with the public establishment, and so got in and kept in. But they were generally stigmatized as heretics, were ranked with the Epicureans, and were prayed against and excluded from eternal life. The prayer which the modern Jews use against Christians, Witsius thinks, was designed by Gamaliel, who made it, against the Sadducees; and that they meant them in their usual imprecation, *Let the name of the wicked rot*. But how degenerate was the character and how miserable the state of the Jewish church, when such profane men as these were among their rulers!

2. In this matter of difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees Paul openly declared himself to be on the Pharisees' side against the Sadducees (v. 6): He cried out, so as to be heard by all, "*I am a Pharisee, was bred a Pharisee, nay, I was born one, in effect, for I was the son of a Pharisee, my father was one before me, and thus far I am still a Pharisee that I hope for the resurrection of the dead, and I may truly say that, if the matter were rightly understood, it would be found that this is it for which I am now called in question*. When Christ was upon earth the Pharisees set themselves most against him, because he witnessed against their traditions and corrupt glosses upon the law; but, after his ascension, the Sadducees set themselves most against his apostles, because they preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead, ch. iv. 1, 2. And it is said (ch. v. 17) that they were the sect of the Sadducees that were filled with indignation at them, because they preached that life and immortality which is brought to light by the gospel. Now here, (1.) Paul owns himself a Pharisee, so far as the Pharisees were in the right. Though as Pharisaism was opposed to Christianity he set himself against it, and against all its traditions that were set up in

competition with the law of God or in contradiction to the gospel of Christ, yet, as it was opposed to Sadducism, he adhered to it. We must never think the worse of any truth of God, nor be more shy of owning it, for its being held by men otherwise corrupt. If the Pharisees will hope for the resurrection of the dead, Paul will go along with them in that hope, and be one of them, whether they will or no. (2.) He might truly say that being persecuted, as a Christian, this was the thing he was called in question for. Perhaps he knew that the Sadducees, though they had not such an interest in the common people as the Pharisees had, yet had underhand incensed the mob against him, under pretence of his having preached to the Gentiles, but really because he had preached the hope of the resurrection. However, being called in question for his being a Christian, he might truly say he was called in question for the hope of the resurrection of the dead, as he afterwards pleaded, ch. xxiv. 15, and ch. xxvi. 6, 7. Though Paul preached against the traditions of the elders (as his Master had done), and therein opposed the Pharisees, yet he valued himself more upon his preaching the resurrection of the dead, and a future state, in which he concurred with the Pharisees.

3. This occasioned a division in the council. It is probable that the high priest sided with the Sadducees (as he had done ch. v. 17, and made it to appear by his rage at Paul, v. 2), which alarmed the Pharisees so much the more; but so it was, there arose a *disension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees* (v. 7), for this word of Paul's made the Sadducees more warm and the Pharisees more cool in the prosecution of him; so that *the multitude was divided*; ἐσχίσθη—*there was a schism, a quarrel among them, and the edge of their zeal began to turn from Paul against one another; nor could they go on to act against him when they could not agree among themselves, or prosecute him for breaking the unity of the church when there was so little among them of the unity of the spirit*. All the cry had been against Paul, but now there arose a great cry against one another, v. 9. So much did a fierce furious spirit prevail among all orders of the Jews at this time that every thing was done with clamour and noise; and in such a tumultuous manner were the great principles of their religion stickled for, by which they received little service, for *the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*. Gainsayers may be convinced by fair reasoning, but never by a great cry.

4. The Pharisees hereupon (would one think it?) took Paul's part (v. 9): *They strove, διαμάχοντο—They fought, saying, We find no evil in this man*. He had conducted himself decently and reverently in the temple, and had attended the service of the church; and, though it was but occasionally, yet it showed

that he was not such an enemy to it as he was said to be. He had spoken very handsomely in his own defence, and given a good account of himself, and had now declared himself orthodox in the great principles of religion, as well as regular and conscientious in his conversation; and therefore they cannot see that he has *done any thing worthy of death or of bonds*. Nay, they go further, "*If a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him concerning Jesus, and put him upon preaching as he does, though we may not be so far satisfied as to give credit to him, yet we ought to be cautioned not to oppose him, lest we be found fighting against God.*" as Gamaliel, who was himself a Pharisee, had argued, *ch. v. 39*. Now here, (1.) We may observe, to the honour of the gospel, that it was witnessed to even by its adversaries, and confessions, not only of its innocency, but of its excellency, were extorted sometimes by the power of truth even from those that persecuted it. Pilate found no fault in Christ though he put him to death, nor Festus in Paul though he detained him in bonds; and the Pharisees here supposed it possible that Paul might have a commission sent him from heaven by an angel to do what he did; and yet it should seem, as elders, they after this joined with the high priest in prosecuting him, *ch. xxiv. 1*. They sinned against the knowledge which they not only had, but sometimes owned, as Christ had said of them, *They have both seen and hated both me and my Father*, John xv. 24. Yet, (2.) We will hope that some of them at least did henceforward conceive a better opinion of Paul than they had had, and were favourable to him, having had such a satisfactory account both of his conversation in all good conscience and of his faith touching another world; and then it must be observed to their honour that their zeal for the traditions of the elders, which Paul had departed from, was so far swallowed up in a zeal for the great and fundamental doctrines of religion, to which Paul still adhered, that if he will heartily join with them against the Sadducees, and adhere to the hope of the resurrection of the dead, they will not think his shaking off the ceremonial law to be an evil in him, but charitably hope that he walks according to the light God has given him by some angel or spirit, and are so far from persecuting him that they are ready to patronize and protect him. The persecuting Pharisees of the church of Rome are not of this spirit: for let a man be ever so sincere and zealous for all the articles of the Christian faith, yet, if he lay not his neck under the yoke of their church's authority, they find evil enough in him to persecute him unto the death.

II. The chief captain's care and conduct stand him in more stead; for when he has thrown this bone of contention between the Pharisees and Sadducees (which set them together by the ears, and gained a fair

testimony from the Pharisees), yet he is never the nearer, but is in danger of being pulled in pieces by them—the Pharisees pulling to have him set at liberty, and the Sadducees pulling to have him put to death, or thrown to the people, like Daniel into the den of lions; so that the chief captain is forced to come with his soldiers and rescue him, as he had done, *ch. xxi. 32*, and *ch. xxii. 24*. 1. See here Paul's danger. Between his friends and his enemies he had like to have been pulled to pieces, the one hugging him to death, the other crushing him to death, such violences are those liable to that are eminent, and that are become remarkable, as Paul was, who was by some so much beloved and by others so much maligned. 2. His deliverance: *The chief captain ordered his soldiers to go down from the upper wards, and to take them by force from among them*, out of that apartment in the temple where he had ordered the council to meet, and to bring him into the castle, or tower of Antonio; for he saw he could make nothing of them towards the understanding of the merits of his cause.

III. Divine consolations stood him in most stead of all. The chief captain had rescued him out of the hands of cruel men, but still he had him in custody, and what might be the issue he could not tell. The castle was indeed a protection to him, but withal it was a confinement; and, as it was now his preservation from so great a death, it might be his reservation for a greater. We do not find that any of the apostles or elders at Jerusalem came to him; either they had not courage or they had not admission. Perhaps, in the night following, Paul was full of thoughts and cares what should become of him, and how his present troubles might be turned to answer some good purpose. Then did the Lord Jesus make him a kind visit, and, though at midnight, yet a very seasonable one (*v. 11*): *The Lord stood by him*, came to his bed-side, though perhaps it was but a bed of straw, to show him that he was all the day long with him really as sure as he was in the night with him visibly. Note, Whoever is against us, we need not fear if the Lord stand by us; if he undertake our protection, we may set those that seek our ruin at defiance. *The Lord is with those that uphold my soul*, and then nothing can come amiss. 1. Christ bids him have a good heart upon it: "*Be of good cheer, Paul*"; be not discouraged; let not what has happened sadden thee, nor let what may yet be before thee frighten thee." Note, It is the will of Christ that his servants who are faithful should be always cheerful. Perhaps Paul, in the reflection, began to be jealous of himself whether he had done well in what he said to the council the day before; but Christ, by his word, satisfies him that God approved of his conduct. Or, perhaps it troubled him that his friends did not come to him; but Christ's visit did itself speak, though he had not said, *Be of good cheer*.



*Paul.* 2. It is a strange argument which he makes use of to encourage him: *As thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.* One would think this was but cold comfort: "As thou hast undergone a great deal of trouble for me so thou must undergo a great deal more;" and yet this was designed to encourage him; for hereby he is given to understand, (1.) That he had been serving Christ as a witness for him in what he had hitherto endured. It was for no fault that he was buffeted, and it was not his former persecuting of the church that was now remembered against him, however he might remember it against himself, but he was still going on with his work. (2.) That he had not yet finished his testimony, nor was, by his imprisonment, laid aside as useless, but was only reserved for further service. Nothing disheartened Paul so much as the thought of being taken off from doing service to Christ and good to souls: *Fear not, says Christ, I have not done with thee* (3.) Paul seems to have had a particular fancy, and an innocent one, to go to Rome, to preach the gospel there, though it was already preached, and a church planted there; yet, being a citizen of Rome, he longed for a journey thither, and had designed it (*ch. xix. 21*): *After I have been at Jerusalem, I must also see Rome.* And he had written to the Romans some time ago that he longed to see them, *Rom. i. 11.* Now he was ready to conclude that this had broken his measures, and he should never see Rome; but even in that Christ tells him he should be gratified, since he desired it for the honour of Christ and to do good.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. 14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. 15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. 16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said,

Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. 18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. 19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. 21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. 22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me. 23 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cæsarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; 24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. 25 And he wrote a letter after this manner: 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. 27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his ac-

cusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell. 31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. 32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 Who, when they came to Cæsarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. 34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia; 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

We have here the story of a plot against the life of Paul; how it was laid, how it was discovered, and how it was defeated.

1. How this plot was laid. They found they could gain nothing by popular tumult, or legal process, and therefore have recourse to the barbarous method of assassination; they will come upon him suddenly, and stab him, if they can but get him within their reach. So restless is their malice against this good man that, when one design fails, they will turn another stone. Now observe here,

1. Who they were that formed this conspiracy. They were *certain Jews* that had the utmost degree of indignation against him because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, *v. 12. And they were more than forty* that were in the design, *v. 13. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!*

2. When the conspiracy was formed: *When it was day. Satan had filled their hearts* in the night to purpose it, and, as soon as it was day, they got together to prosecute it; answering to the account which the prophet gives of some who *work evil upon their beds, and when the morning is light they practise it*, and are laid under a woe for it, Mic. ii. 1. In the night Christ appeared to Paul to protect him, and, when it was day, here were forty men appearing against him to destroy him; they were not up so soon but Christ was up before them *God shall help her, and that right early*, Ps. xlv. 5.

3. What the conspiracy was. These men *banded together* in a league, perhaps they called it a *holy league*; they engaged to stand by one another, and every one, to his power, to be aiding and assisting to murder Paul. It was strange that so many could so soon be got together, and that in Jerusalem too, who were so perfectly lost to all sense of humanity and honour as to engage in so bloody a design. Well might the prophet's complaint be renewed concerning Jerusalem (Isa. i. 21): *Righteousness has lodged in it, but now mur-*

*derers.* What a monstrous idea must these men have formed of Paul, before they could be capable of forming such a monstrous design against him; they must be made to believe that he was the worst of men, an enemy to God and religion, and the curse and plague of his generation; when really his character was the reverse of all this! What laws of truth and justice so sacred, so strong which malice and bigotry will not break through!

4. How firm they made it, as they thought, that none of them might fly off, upon conscience of the horror of the fact, at second thoughts: *They bound themselves under an anathema*, imprecating the heaviest curses upon themselves, their souls, bodies, and families, if they did not kill Paul, and so quickly *that they would not eat nor drink till they had done it.* What a complication of wickedness is here! To design to kill an innocent man, a good man, a useful man, a man that had done them no harm, but was willing to do them all the good he could, was *going in the way of Cain*, and proved them to be of *their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning*; yet, as if this had been a small matter, (1.) They bound themselves to it. To incline to do evil, and intend to do it, is bad; but to engage to do it is much worse. This is entering into covenant with the devil; it is swearing allegiance to the prince of darkness; it is leaving no room for repentance; nay, it is bidding defiance to it. (2.) They bound one another to it, and did all they could, not only to secure the damnation of their own souls, but of theirs whom they drew into the association. (3.) They showed a great contempt of the providence of God, and a presumption upon it, in that they bound themselves to do such a thing within so short a time as they could continue fasting, without any proviso or reserve for the disposal of an overruling Providence. When we say, *To-morrow we will do this or that*, be it ever so lawful and good, forasmuch as *we know not what shall be on the morrow*, we must add, *If the Lord will.* But with what face could they insert a proviso for the permission of God's providence when they knew that what they were about was directly against the prohibitions of God's word? (4.) They showed a great contempt of their own souls and bodies; of their own souls in imprecating a curse upon them if they did not proceed in this desperate enterprise (what a woeful dilemma did they throw themselves upon! God certainly meets them with his curse if they do go on in it, and they desire he would if they do not!)—and of their own bodies too (for wilful sinners are the destroyers of both) in tying themselves out from the necessary supports of life till they had accomplished a thing which they could never lawfully do, and perhaps not possibly do. Such language of hell those speak that wish God to damn them, and the devil to take them, if they do not do so and so. *As they love cursing, so*



*shall it come unto them.* Some think the meaning of this curse was, they would either kill Paul, as an Achan, an accursed thing, a troubler of the camp; or, if they did not do it, they would make themselves accursed before God in his stead. (5.) They showed a most eager desire to compass this matter, and an impatience till it was done: not only like David's enemies, *that were mad against him, and sworn against him* (Ps. cii. 8), but like the servants of Job against his enemy: *O that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied,* Job xxxi. 31. Persecutors are said to *eat up God's people as they eat bread*; it is as much a gratification to them as meat to one that is hungry, Ps. xiv. 4.

5. What method they took to bring it about. There is no getting near Paul in the castle. He is there under the particular protection of the government, and is imprisoned, not, as others are, lest he should do harm, but lest he should have harm done him; and therefore the contrivance is that the chief priests and elders must desire the governor of the castle to let Paul come to them to the council-chamber, to be further examined (they have some questions to ask him, or something to say to him), and then, in his passage from the castle to the council, they would put an end to all disputes about Paul by killing him; thus the plot was laid, v. 14, 15. Having been all day employed in engaging one another to this wickedness, towards evening they come to the principal members of the great sanhedrim, and, though they might have concealed their mean design and yet might have moved them upon some other pretence to send for Paul, they are so confident of their approbation of this villany, that they are not ashamed nor afraid to own to them *that they have bound themselves under a great curse, without consulting the priests first whether they might lawfully do it, that they will eat nothing the next day till they have killed Paul.* They design to breakfast the next morning upon his blood. They doubt not but the chief priests will not only countenance them in the design, but will lend them a helping hand, and be their tools to get them an opportunity of killing Paul; nay, and tell a lie for them too, pretending to the chief captain *that they would enquire something more perfectly concerning him, when they meant no such thing.* What a mean, what an ill opinion had they of their priests, when they could apply to them on such an errand as this! And yet, vile as the proposal was which was made to them (for aught that appears), the priests and elders consented to it, and at the first word, without boggling at it in the least, promised to gratify them. Instead of reproving them, as they ought, for their wicked conspiracy, they bolstered them up in it, because it was against Paul whom they hated; and thus they made themselves partakers of the crime as much as if they had been the first in the conspiracy

II. How the plot was discovered. We do not find that the plotters, though they took an oath of fidelity, took an oath of secrecy, either because they thought it did not need it (they would every one keep his own counsel) or because they thought they could accomplish it, though it should take wind and be known; but Providence so ordered it that it was brought to light, and so as effectually to be brought to nought. See here,

1. How it was discovered to Paul, v. 16. There was a youth that was related to Paul, *his sister's son*, whose mother probably lived in Jerusalem; and some how or other, we are not told how, *he heard of their lying in wait*, either overheard them talking of it among themselves, or got intelligence from some that were in the plot: and *he went into the castle*, probably, as he used to do, to attend on his uncle, and bring him what he wanted, which gave him a free access to him, and *he told Paul* what he heard. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light the hidden works of darkness; though the contrivers of them dig deep to hide them from the Lord, he can make a bird of the air to carry the voice (Eccl. x. 20), or the conspirators' own tongues to betray them.

2. How it was discovered to the chief captain by the young man that told it to Paul. This part of the story is related very particularly, perhaps because the penman was an eye-witness of the prudent and successful management of this affair, and remembered it with a great deal of pleasure. (1.) Paul had got a good interest in the officers that attended, by his prudent peaceable deportment. He could call one of the centurions to him, though a centurion was one in authority, that had soldiers under him, and used to call, not to be called to, and he was ready to come at his call (v. 17); and he desired that he would introduce this young man to the chief captain, to give in an information of something that concerned the honour of the government. (2.) The centurion very readily gratified him, v. 18. He did not send a common soldier with him, but went himself to keep the young man in countenance, to recommend his errand to the chief captain, and to show his respect to Paul: "*Paul the prisoner* (this was his title now) *called me to him, and prayed me to bring this young man to thee; what his business is I know not, but he has something to say to thee.*" Note, It is true charity to poor prisoners to act for them as well as to give to them. "*I was sick and in prison, and you went on an errand for me,*" will pass as well in the account as, "*I was sick and in prison, and you came unto me, to visit me, or sent me a token.*" Those that have acquaintance and interest should be ready to use them for the assistance of those that are in distress. This centurion helped to save Paul's life by this piece of civility, which should engage us to be ready to do the like when there is occasion. *Open*



thy mouth for the dumb, Prov xxxi. 8. Those that cannot give a good gift to God's prisoners may yet speak a good word for them. (3.) The chief captain received the information with a great deal of condescension and tenderness, v. 19. He took the young man by the hand, as a friend or father, to encourage him, that he might not be put out of countenance, but might be assured of a favourable audience. The notice that is taken of this circumstance should encourage great men to make themselves easy of access to the meanest, upon any errand which may give them an opportunity of doing good—to condescend to those of low estate. This familiarity to which this Roman tribune or colonel admitted Paul's nephew is here upon record to his honour. Let no man think he disparages himself by his humility or charity. He went with him aside privately, that none might hear his business, and asked him, "What is it that thou hast to tell me?" Tell me wherein I can be serviceable to Paul." It is probable that the chief captain was the more obliging in this case because he was sensible he had run himself into a premunire in binding Paul, against his privilege as a Roman citizen, which he was willing now to atone for. (4.) The young man delivered his errand to the chief captain very readily and handsomely (v. 20, 21). "The Jews" (he does not say who, lest he should invidiously reflect upon the chief priests and the elders, and his business was to save his uncle's life, not to accuse his enemies) "have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, presuming that, being so short a distance, thou wilt send him without a guard; but do not thou yield unto them, we have reason to believe thou wilt not when thou knowest the truth; for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, who have sworn to be the death of him, and now are they ready looking for a promise from thee, but I have happily got the start of them." (5.) The captain dismissed the young man with a charge of secrecy: See that thou tell no man that thou hast shown these things unto me, v. 22. The favours of great men are not always to be boasted of; and those that cannot keep counsel are not fit to be employed in business. If it should be known that the chief captain had this information brought to him, perhaps they would compass and imagine the death of Paul some other way; "therefore keep it private."

III. How the plot was defeated: The chief captain, finding how implacable and inveterate the malice of the Jews was against Paul, how restless they were in their designs to do him a mischief, and how near he was to become himself accessory to it as a minister, resolves to send him away with all speed out of their reach. He received the intelligence with horror and indignation at the baseness and bloody-mindedness of these Jews; and seemed afraid lest, if he should detain Paul

in his castle here, under ever so strong a guard, they would find some way or other to compass their end notwithstanding, either beating the guards or burning the castle; and, whatever came of it, he would, if possible, protect Paul, because he looked upon it that he did not deserve such treatment. What a melancholy observation is it, that the Jewish chief priests, when they knew of this assassination-plot, should countenance it, and assist in it, while a Roman chief captain, purely from a natural sense of justice and humanity, when he knows it, sets himself to baffle it, and puts himself to a great deal of trouble to do it effectually!

1. He orders a considerable detachment of the Roman forces under his command to get ready to go to Cæsarea with all expedition, and to bring Paul thither to Felix the governor, where he might sooner expect to have justice done him than by the great-sanhedrim at Jerusalem. I see not but the chief captain might, without any unfaithfulness to the duty of his place, have set Paul at liberty, and given him leave to shift for his own safety, for he was never legally committed to his custody as a criminal, he himself owns that nothing was laid to his charge worthy of bonds (v. 29), and he ought to have had the same tenderness for his liberty that he had for his life; but he feared that this would have incensed the Jews too much against him. Or perhaps, finding Paul to be a very extraordinary man, he was proud to have him his prisoner, and under his protection; and the mighty parade with which he sent him off intimates as much. Two centurions, or captains of the hundreds, are employed in this business, v. 23, 24. They must get ready two hundred soldiers, probably those under their own command, to go to Cæsarea; and with these seventy horse, and two hundred spearmen besides, which some think were the chief captain's guards; whether they were horse or foot is not certain, most probably foot, as pikemen for the protection of the horse. See how justly God brought the Jewish nation under the Roman yoke, when such a party of the Roman army was necessary to restrain them from the most execrable villanies! There needed not all this force, there needed not any of it, to keep Paul from being rescued by his friends; ten times this force would not have kept him from being rescued by an angel, if it had pleased God to work his deliverance that way, as he had sometimes done; but, (1.) The chief captain designed hereby to expose the Jews, as a headstrong tumultuous people, that would not be kept within the bounds of duty and decency by the ordinary ministers of justice, but needed to be awed by such a train as this; and, hearing how many were in the conspiracy against Paul, he thought less would not serve to defeat their attempt. (2.) God designed hereby to encourage Paul; for, being thus attended, he was not only kept



safely in the hands of his friends, but out of the hands of his enemies. Yet Paul did not desire such a guard, any more than Ezra did (Ezra viii. 22), and for the same reason, because he trusted in God's all-sufficiency; it was owing, however, to the governor's own care. But he was also made considerable; thus his *bonds in Christ* were made manifest all the country over (Phil. i. 13); and, so great an honour having been put upon them before by the prediction of them, it was agreeable enough that they should be thus honourably attended, *that the brethren in the Lord might wax the more confident by his bonds*, when they saw him rather guarded as the patriot of his country than guarded against as the pest of his country, and so great a preacher made so great a prisoner. When his enemies hate him, and I doubt his friends neglect him, then does a Roman tribune patronise him, and carefully provide, [1.] For his ease: *Let them provide beasts, that they may set Paul on*. Had his Jewish persecutors ordered his removal by *habeas corpus* to Cæsarea, they would have made him run on foot, or dragged him thither in a cart, or on a sledge, or have horsed him behind one of the troopers; but the chief captain treats him like a gentleman, though he was his prisoner, and orders him a good horse to ride upon, not at all afraid that he should ride away. Nay, the order being that they should provide, not a beast, but beasts, to set Paul on, we must either suppose that he was allowed so great a piece of state as to have a led horse, or more, that if he did not like one he might take to another; or (as some expositors conjecture) that he had beasts assigned him for his friends and companions, as many as pleased to go along with him, to divert him in his journey, and to minister to him. [2.] For his security. They have a strict charge given them by their commander in chief to bring him safely to Felix the governor, to whom he is consigned, and who was supreme in all civil affairs among the Jews, as this chief captain was in military affairs. The Roman historians speak much of this Felix, as a man of mean extraction, but that raised himself by his shifts to be governor of Judea, in the execution of which office, Tacitus, *Hist.* 5, says of him: *Per omnem sævitiam ac libidinem jus regium servili ingenio exercuit—He used royal power with a servile genius, and in connection with all the varieties of cruelty and lust*. To the judgment of such a man as this is poor Paul turned over; and yet better so than in the hands of Ananias the high priest! Now, a prisoner, thus upon his deliverance by course of law, ought to be protected as well as a prince.

2. The chief captain orders, for the greater security of Paul, that he be taken away at the third hour of the night, which some understand of three hours after sun-set, that, it being now soon after the feast of pentecost

(that is, in the midst of summer), they might have the cool of the night to march in. Others understand it of three hours after midnight, in the third watch, about three in the morning, that they might have the day before them, and might get out of Jerusalem before Paul's enemies were stirring, and so might prevent any popular tumult, and leave them to roar when they rose, like a lion disappointed of his prey.

3. He writes a letter to Felix the governor of this province, by which he discharges himself from any further care about Paul, and leaves the whole matter with Felix. This letter is here inserted *totidem verbis—verbatim*, v. 25. It is probable that Luke the historian had a copy of it by him, having attended Paul in this remove. Now in this epistle we may observe,

(1.) The compliments he passes upon the governor, v. 26. He is the most excellent governor Felix, this title being given him of course, his excellency, &c. He sends him greeting, wishes him all health and prosperity; may he rejoice, may he ever rejoice.

(2.) The just and fair account which he gives him of Paul's case: [1.] That he was one that the Jews had a pique against: *They had taken him, and would have killed him*; and perhaps Felix knew the temper of the Jews so well that he did not think much the worse of him for that, v. 27. [2.] That he had protected him because he was a Roman: "When they were about to kill him, I came with an army, a considerable body of men, and rescued him;" which action for a citizen of Rome would recommend him to the Roman governor. [3.] That he could not understand the merits of his cause, nor what it was that made him so odious to the Jews, and obnoxious to their ill-will. He took the proper method to know: he brought him forth into their council (v. 28), to be examined there, hoping that, either from their complaints or his own confessions, he should learn something of the ground of all this clamour, but he found that he was accused of questions of their law (v. 29), about the hope of the resurrection of the dead, v. 6. This chief captain was a man of sense and honour, and had good principles in him of justice and humanity; and yet see how slightly he speaks of another world, and the great things of that world, as if that were a question, which is of undoubted certainty, and which both sides agreed in, except the Sadducees; and as if that were a question only of their law, which is of the utmost concern to all mankind! Or perhaps he refers rather to the question about their rituals than about their doctrinals, and the quarrel he perceived they had with him was for lessening the credit and obligation of their ceremonial law, which he looked upon as a thing not worth speaking of. The Romans allowed the nations they conquered the exercise of their own religion, and never offered to im-



pose theirs upon them; yet, as conservators of the public peace, they would not suffer them, under colour of their religion, to abuse their neighbours. [4.] That thus far he understood that there was *nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds*, much less proved or made out against him. The Jews had, by their wickedness, made themselves odious to the world, had polluted their own honour and profaned their own crown, had brought disgrace upon their church, their law, and their holy place, and then they cry out against Paul, as having diminished the reputation of them; and was this a crime *worthy of death or of bonds*?

(3.) His referring Paul's case to Felix (v. 30): "*When it was told me that the Jews laid wait for the man, to kill him, without any legal process against him, I sent straight-way to thee, who art the most proper person to hear the cause, and give judgment upon it, and let his accusers go after him, if they please, and say before thee what they have against him, for, being bred a soldier, I will never pretend to be a judge, and so farewell.*"

4. Paul was accordingly conducted to Cæsarea; the soldiers got him safely out of Jerusalem by night, and left the conspirators to consider whether they should eat and drink or no before they had killed Paul; and, if they would not repent of the wickedness of their oath as it was against Paul, they were now at leisure to repent of the rashness of it as it was against themselves; if any of them did starve themselves to death, in consequence of their oath and vexation at their disappointment, they fell unpitied. Paul was conducted to *Antipatris*, which was seventeen miles from Jerusalem, and about the mid-way to Cæsarea, v. 31. Thence *the two hundred foot-soldiers, and the two hundred spearmen, returned* back to Jerusalem, to their quarters *in the castle*; for, having conducted Paul out of danger, there needed not so strong a guard, but *the horse-men* might serve to bring him to Cæsarea, and would do it with more expedition; this they did, not only to save their own labour, but their master's charge; and it is an example to servants, not only to act obediently according to their masters' orders, but to act prudently, so as may be most for their masters' interest.

5. He was delivered into the hands of Felix, as his prisoner, v. 33. The officers *presented the letter, and Paul with it, to Felix*, and so discharged themselves of their trust. Paul had never affected acquaintance or society with great men, but with the disciples, wherever he came; yet Providence overrules his sufferings so as by them to give him an opportunity of witnessing to Christ before great men; and so Christ had foretold concerning his disciples, *that they should be brought before rulers and kings for his sake, for a testimony against them*, Mark xiii. 9. *The governor enquired of what pro-*

*vince* of the empire the prisoner originally was, and was told *that he was a native of Cilicia*, v. 34; and, (1.) He promises him a speedy trial (v. 35): "*I will hear thee when thine accusers have come, and will have an ear open to both sides, as becomes a judge.*" (2.) He ordered him into custody, that he should be kept a prisoner in *Herod's judgment-hall*, in some apartment belonging to that palace which was denominated from Herod the Great, who built it. There he had opportunity of acquainting himself with the great men that attended the governor's court, and, no doubt, he improved what acquaintance he got there to the best purposes.

## CHAP. XXIV.

We left Paul a prisoner at Cæsarea, in Herod's judgment-hall, expecting his trial to come on quickly; for in the beginning of his imprisonment his affairs moved very quickly, but afterwards very slowly. In this chapter we have his arraignment and trial before Felix the governor at Cæsarea; here is, I. The appearing of the prosecutors against him, and the setting of the prisoner to the bar, ver. 1, 2. II. The opening of the indictment against him by Tertullus, who was of counsel for the prosecutors, and the aggravating of the charge, with abundance of compliments to the judge, and malice to the prisoner, ver. 2-8. III. The corroborating of the charge by the testimony of the witnesses, or rather the prosecutors themselves, ver. 9. IV. The prisoner's defence, in which, with all due deference to the governor (ver. 10), he denies the charge, and challenges them to prove it (ver. 11-13), owns the truth, and makes an unexceptionable profession of his faith, which he declares was it that they hated him for (ver. 14-16), and gives a more particular account of what had passed from their first seizing him, challenging them to specify any ill they had found in him, ver. 17-21. V. The adjourning of the cause, and the continuing of the prisoner in custody, ver. 22, 23. VI. The private conversation that was between the prisoner and the judge, by which the prisoner hoped to do good to the judge and the judge thought to get money by the prisoner, but both in vain, ver. 24-26. VII. The lengthening out of Paul's imprisonment for two years, till another governor came (ver. 27), where he seems as much neglected as there had been ado about him.

AND after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and *with* a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. 2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. 5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. 7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands. 8 Com-



manding his accusers to come unto thee : by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. 9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

We must suppose that *Lysias*, the chief captain, when he had sent away Paul to *Cæsarea*, gave notice to the chief priests, and others that had appeared against Paul, that if they had any thing to accuse him of they must follow him to *Cæsarea*, and there they would find him, and a judge ready to hear them—thinking, perhaps, they would not have given themselves so much trouble ; but what will not malice do ?

I. We have here the cause followed against Paul, and it is vigorously carried on. 1. Here is no time lost, for they are ready for a hearing *after five days* ; all other business is laid aside immediately, to prosecute Paul ; so intent are evil men to do evil ! Some reckon *these five days* from Paul's being first seized, and with most probability, for he says here (v. 11) *that it was but twelve days since he came up to Jerusalem*, and he had spent *seven in his purifying in the temple*, so that these five must be reckoned from the last of those. 2. Those who had been his judges do themselves appear here as his prosecutors. *Ananias himself the high priest*, who had sat to judge him, now stands to inform against him. One would wonder, (1.) That he should thus disparage himself, and forget the dignity of his place. Shall the high priest turn informer, and leave all his business in the temple at Jerusalem, to go to be called as a prosecutor in *Herod's judgment-hall* ? Justly did God make the priests contemptible and base, when they made themselves so, *Mal. ii. 9.* (2.) That he should thus discover himself and his enmity against Paul ! If men of the first rank have a malice against any, they think it policy to employ others against them, and to play least in sight themselves, because of the odium that commonly attends it ; but Ananias is not ashamed to own himself a sworn enemy to Paul. The elders attended him, to signify their concurrence with him, and to invigorate the prosecution ; for they could not find any attorneys or solicitors that would follow it with so much violence as they desired. The pains that evil men take in an evil matter, their contrivances, their condescensions, and their unwearied industry, should shame us out of our coldness and backwardness, and our indifference in that which is good.

II. We have here the cause pleaded against Paul. The prosecutors brought with them a certain orator named *Tertullus*, a Roman, skilled in the Roman law and language, and therefore fittest to be employed in a cause before the Roman governor, and most likely to gain favour. The high priest, and elders,

though they had their own hearts spiteful enough, did not think their own tongues sharp enough, and therefore retained *Tertullus*, who probably was noted for a satirical wit, to be of counsel for them ; and, no doubt, they gave him a good fee, probably out of the treasury of the temple, which they had the command of, it being a cause wherein the church was concerned and which therefore must not be starved. Paul is set to the bar before *Felix* the governor : *He was called forth, v. 2.* *Tertullus's* business is, on the behalf of the prosecutors, to open the information against him, and he is a man that will say any thing for his fee ; mercenary tongues will do so. No cause so unjust but can find advocates to plead it ; and yet we hope many advocates are so just as not knowingly to patronise an unrighteous cause, but *Tertullus* was none of these : his speech (or at least an abstract of it, for it appears, by *Tully's* orations, that the Roman lawyers, on such occasions, used to make long harangues) is here reported, and it is made up of flattery and falsehood ; it calls evil good, and good evil.

1. One of the worst of men is here applauded as one of the best of benefactors only because he was the judge. *Felix* is represented by the historians of his own nation, as well as by *Josephus* the Jew, as a very bad man, who, depending upon his interest in the court, allowed himself in all manner of wickedness, was a great oppressor, very cruel, and very covetous, patronising and protecting assassins.—*Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 6.* And yet *Tertullus* here, in the name of the high priest and elders, and probably by particular directions from them and according to the instructions of his brief, compliments him, and extols him to the sky, as if he were so good a magistrate as never was the like : and this comes the worse from the high priest and the elders, because he had given a late instance of his enmity to their order ; for *Jonathan* the high priest, or one of the chief priests, having offended him by too free an invective against the tyranny of his government, he had him murdered by some villains whom he hired for that purpose, and who afterwards did the like for others, as they were hired : *Cujus facinoris quia nemo ultor extitit, invitati hac licentia sicarii multos confodiebant, alios propter privatas inimicitias, alios conducti pecunia, etiam in ipso templo—No one being found to punish such enormous wickedness, the assassins, encouraged by this impunity, stabbed several persons, some from personal malice, some for hire, and that even in the temple itself.* And yet, to engage him to gratify their malice against Paul, and to return them that kindness for their kindness in overlooking all this, they magnify him as the greatest blessing to their church and nation that ever came among them.

(1.) They are very ready to own it (v. 2) :



"By thee we, of the church, enjoy great quietness, and we look upon thee as our patron and protector, and very worthy deeds are done, from time to time, to the whole nation of the Jews, by thy providence—thy wisdom, and care, and vigilance." To give him his due, he had been instrumental to suppress the insurrection of that Egyptian of whom the chief captain spoke (*ch.* xxi. 38); but wilt the praise of that screen him from the just reproach of his tyranny and oppression afterwards? See here, [1.] The unhappiness of great men, and a great unhappiness it is, to have their services magnified beyond measure, and never to be faithfully told of their faults; and hereby they are hardened and encouraged in evil. [2.] The policy of bad men, by flattering princes in what they do amiss to draw them in to do worse. The bishops of Rome got themselves confirmed in their exorbitant church power, and have been assisted in persecuting the servants of Christ, by flattering and caressing usurpers and tyrants, and so making them the tools of their malice, as the high priest, by his compliments, designed to make Felix here.

(2.) They promise to retain a grateful sense of it (*v.* 3): "*We accept it always, and in all places, every where and at all times we embrace it, we admire it, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. We will be ready, upon any occasion, to witness for thee, that thou art a wise and good governor, and very serviceable to the country.*" And, if it had been true that he was such a governor, it had been just that they should thus accept his good offices with all thankfulness. The benefits which we enjoy by government, especially by the administration of wise and good governors, are what we ought to be thankful for, both to God and man. This is part of the honour due to magistrates, to acknowledge the quietness we enjoy under their protection, and the worthy deeds done by their prudence.

(3.) They therefore expect his favour in this cause, *v.* 4. They pretend a great care not to intrench upon his time: *We will not be further tedious to thee*; and yet to be very confident of his patience: *I pray thee that thou wouldst hear us of thy clemency a few words.* All this address is only *ad captandam benevolentiam*—to induce him to give countenance to their cause; and they were so conscious to themselves that it would soon appear to have more malice than matter in it that they found it necessary thus to insinuate themselves into his favour. Every body knew that the high priest and the elders were enemies to the Roman government, and were uneasy under all the marks of that yoke, and therefore, in their hearts, hated Felix; and yet, to gain their ends against Paul, they, by their counsel, show him all this respect, as they did to Pilate and Cæsar when they were persecuting our Saviour. Princes cannot always judge of the affections

of their people by their applauses; flattery is one thing, and true loyalty is another.

2. One of the best of men is here accused as one of the worst of malefactors, only because he was the prisoner. After a flourish of flattery, in which you cannot see matter for words, he comes to his business, and it is to inform his excellency concerning the prisoner at the bar; and this part of his discourse is as nauseous for its rallery as the former part is for its flattery. I pity the man, and believe he has no malice against Paul, nor does he think as he speaks in calumniating him, any more than he did in courting Felix; but, as I cannot but be sorry that a man of wit and sense should have such a saleable tongue (as one calls it), so I cannot but be angry at those dignified men that had such malicious hearts as to put such words into his mouth. Two things Tertullus here complains of to Felix, in the name of the high priest and the elders:—

(1.) That the peace of the nation was disturbed by Paul. They could not have baited Christ's disciples if they had not first dressed them up in the skins of wild beasts, nor have given them as they did the vilest of treatment if they had not first represented them as the vilest of men, though the characters they gave of them were absolutely false and there was not the least colour nor foundation for them. Innocence, nay excellence and usefulness, are no fence against calumny, no, nor against the impressions of calumny upon the minds both of magistrates and multitudes to excite their fury and jealousy; for, be the representation ever so unjust, when it is enforced, as here it was, with gravity and pretence of sanctity, and with assurance and noise, something will stick. The old charge against God's prophets was that they were the troublers of the land, and against God's Jerusalem that it was a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces (*Ezra* iv. 15, 19), and against our Lord Jesus that he perverted the nation, and forbade to give tribute to Cæsar. It is the very same against Paul here; and, though utterly false, is averred with all the confidence imaginable. They do not say, "We suspect him to be a dangerous man, and have taken him up upon that suspicion;" but, as if the thing were past dispute, "*We have found him to be so*; we have often and long found him so;" as if he were a traitor and rebel already convicted. And yet, after all, there is not a word of truth in this representation; but, if Paul's just character be enquired into, it will be found directly the reverse of this.

[1.] Paul was a useful man, and a great blessing to his country, a man of exemplary candour and goodness, obliging to all, and provoking to none; and yet he is here called a pestilent fellow (*v.* 5): "*We have found him, λοιπὸν—pestem—the plague of the nation, a walking pestilence, which supposes him to be a man of a turbulent spirit, malicious and*



ill-natured, and one that threw all things in disorder wherever he came. They would have it thought that he had done more mischief in his time than a plague could do,—that the mischief he did was spreading and infectious, and that he made others as mischievous as himself,—that it was of as fatal consequence as the plague is, killing and destroying, and laying all waste,—that it was as much to be dreaded and guarded against as a plague is. Many a good sermon he had preached, and many a good work he had done, and for these he is called a pestilent fellow.

[2.] Paul was a peace-maker, was a preacher of that gospel which has a direct tendency to *slay all enmities*, and to establish true and lasting peace; he lived peaceably and quietly himself, and taught others to do so too, and yet is here represented as a *mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout all the world*. The Jews were disaffected to the Roman government; those of them that were most bigoted were most so. This Felix knew, and had therefore a watchful eye upon them. Now they would fain make him believe that this Paul was the man that made them so, whereas they themselves were the men that sowed the seeds of faction and sedition among them: and they knew it; and the reason why they hated Christ and his religion was because he did not go about to head them in an opposition to the Romans. The Jews were every where much set against Paul, and stirred up the people to clamour against him; they moved sedition in all places where he came, and then cast the blame unjustly upon him, as if he had been the mover of the sedition; as Nero not long after set Rome on fire, and then said the Christians did it.

[3.] Paul was a man of catholic charity, who did not affect to be singular, but made himself the servant of all for their good; and yet he is here charged as being a *ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes*, a standard-bearer of that sect, so the word signifies. When Cyprian was condemned to die for being a Christian, this was inserted in his sentence, that he was *auctor iniqui nominis et signifer*—*The author and standard-bearer of a wicked cause*. Now it was true that Paul was an active leading man in propagating Christianity. But, *First*, It was utterly false that this was a sect; he did not draw people to a party or private opinion, nor did he make his own opinions their rule. True Christianity establishes that which is of common concern to all mankind, publishes good-will to men, and shows us God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and therefore cannot be thought to take its rise from such narrow opinions and private interests as sects owe their origin to. True Christianity has a direct tendency to the uniting of the children of men, and the gathering of them together in one; and, as far as it obtains its just power and influence upon

the minds of men, will make them meek and quiet, and peaceable and loving, and every way easy, acceptable, and profitable one to another, and therefore is far from being a sect, which is supposed to lead to division and to sow discord. True Christianity aims at no worldly benefit or advantage, and therefore must by no means be called a sect. Those that espouse a sect are governed in it by their secular interest, they aim at wealth and honour; but the professors of Christianity are so far from this that they expose themselves thereby to the loss and ruin of all that is dear to them in this world. *Secondly*, It is invidiously called *the sect of the Nazarenes*, by which Christ was represented as of Nazareth, whence no good thing was expected to arise; whereas he was of Bethlehem, where the Messiah was to be born. Yet he was pleased to call himself, *Jesus of Nazareth*, ch. xxii. 8. And the scripture has put an honour on the name, Matt. ii. 23. And therefore, though intended for a reproach, the Christians had no reason to be ashamed of sharing with their Master in it. *Thirdly*, It was false that Paul was the author or standard-bearer of this sect; for he did not draw people to himself, but to Christ—did not preach himself, but Christ Jesus.

[4.] Paul had a veneration for the temple, as it was the place which God had chosen to put his name there, and had lately himself with reverence attended the temple-service; and yet it is here charged upon him that he went about to *profane the temple*, and that he designedly put contempt upon it, and violated the laws of it, v. 6. Their proof of this failed; for what they alleged as matter of fact was utterly false, and they knew it, ch. xxi. 29.

(2.) That the course of justice against Paul was obstructed by the chief captain. [1.] They pleaded that they *took him, and would have judged him according to their law*. This was false; they did not go about to judge him according to their law, but, contrary to all law and equity, went about to *beat him to death* or to *pull him to pieces*, without hearing what he had to say for himself—went about, under pretence of having him into their court, to throw him into the hands of ruffians that lay in wait to destroy him. Was this judging him according to their law? It is easy for men, when they know what they should have done, to say, this they would have done, when they meant nothing less. [2.] They reflected upon the chief captain as having done them an injury in rescuing Paul out of their hands; whereas he therein not only did him justice, but them the greatest kindness that could be, in preventing the guilt they were bringing upon themselves: *The chief captain Lysias came upon us and with great violence* (but really no more than was necessary) *took him out of our hands*, v. 7. See how persecutors are enraged at their disappointments, which they ought to be thankful for. When David in a heat

of passion was going upon a bloody enterprise, he thanked Abigail for stopping him, and God for sending her to do it, so soon did he correct and recover himself. But these cruel men justify themselves, and reckon him their enemy who kept them (as David there speaks) from shedding blood with their own hands. [3.] They referred the matter to Felix and his judgment, yet seeming uneasy that they were under a necessity of doing so, the chief captain having obliged them to it (v. 8): "It was he that forced us to give your excellency this trouble, and ourselves too; for," *First*, "He commanded his accusers to come to thee, that thou mightest hear the charge, when it might as well have been ended in the inferior court." *Secondly*, "He has left it to thee to examine him, and try what thou canst get out of him, and whether thou canst by his confession come to the knowledge of those things which we lay to his charge."

III. The assent of the Jews to this charge which Tertullus exhibited (v. 9): *They confirmed it, saying that those things were so.* 1. Some think this expresses the proof of their charge by witnesses upon oath, that were examined as to the particulars of it, and attested them. And no wonder if, when they had found an orator that would say it, they found witnesses that would swear it, for money. 2. It rather seems to intimate the approbation which the high priest and the elders gave to what Tertullus said. Felix asked them, "Is this your sense, and is it all that you have to say?" And they answered, "Yes it is;" and so they made themselves guilty of all the falsehood that was in his speech. Those that have not the wit and parts to do mischief with that some others have, that cannot make speeches and hold disputes against religion, yet make themselves guilty of the mischiefs others do, by assenting to that which others do, and saying, These things are so, repeating and standing by what is said, to *pervert the right ways of the Lord*. Many that have not learning enough to plead for Baal yet have wickedness enough to vote for Baal.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: 11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. 14

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: 15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. 16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. 17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. 18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. 19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. 20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, 21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

We have here Paul's defence of himself, in answer to Tertullus's charge, and there appears in it a great deal of the spirit of wisdom and holiness, and an accomplishment of Christ's promise to his followers that when they were before governors and kings, for his sake, it should be *given them in that same hour what they should speak*. Though Tertullus had said a great many provoking things, yet Paul did not interrupt him, but let him go on to the end of his speech, according to the rules of decency and the method in courts of justice, that the plaintiff be allowed to finish his evidence before the defendant begins his plea. And when he had done, he did not presently fly out into passionate exclamations against the iniquity of the times and the men (*O tempora! O mores!*)—*Oh the degeneracy of the times!*) but he waited for a permission from the judge to speak in his turn, and had it. The governor beckoned to him to speak, v. 10. And now he also may have leave to speak out, under the protection of the governor, which was more than he could hitherto obtain. And, when he did speak, he made no reflections at all upon Tertullus, who he knew spoke for his fee, and therefore despised what he said, and levelled his defence against those that employed him. And here,

I. He addressed himself very respectfully to the governor, and with a confidence that he would do him justice. Here are no such flattering compliments as Tertullus



soothed him up with, but, which was more truly respectful, a profession that he *answered for himself cheerfully*, and with good assurance *before him*, looking upon him, though not as one that was his friend, yet as one that would be fair and impartial. He thus expresses his expectation that he would be so, to engage him to be so. It was likewise the language of one that was conscious to himself of his own integrity, and whose heart did not reproach him, whoever did. He did not stand trembling at the bar; on the contrary, he was very cheerful when he had one to be his judge that was not a party, but an indifferent person. Nay, when he considers who his judge is, he *answers the more cheerfully*; and why so? He does not say, "Because I know thee to be a judge of inflexible justice and integrity, that hatest bribes, and in giving judgment fearest God, and regardest not man;" for he could not justly say this of him, and therefore would not say it, though it were to gain his favour ever so much; but, *I the more cheerfully answer for myself*, because *I know thou hast been many years a judge to this nation*; and this was very true, and being so, 1. He could say of his own knowledge that there had not formerly been any complaints against Paul. Such clamours as they raised are generally against old offenders; but, though he had long sat judge there, he never had Paul brought before him till now; and therefore he was not so dangerous a criminal as he was represented to be. 2. He was well acquainted with the Jewish nation, and with their temper and spirit. He knew how bigoted they were to their own way, what furious zealots they were against all that did not comply with them, how peevish and perverse they generally were, and therefore would make allowances for that in their accusation of him, and not regard that which he had reason to think came so much from party-malice. Though he did not know him, he knew his prosecutors, and by this might guess what manner of man he was.

II. He denies the facts that he was charged with, upon which their character of him was grounded. *Moving sedition*, and *profaning the temple*, were the crimes for which he stood indicted, crimes which they knew the Roman governors were not accustomed to enquire into, and therefore they hoped that the governor would return him back to them to be judged by their law, and this was all they wished for. But Paul desires that though he would not enquire into the crimes he would protect one that was unjustly charged with them from those whom he knew to be spiteful and ill-natured enough. Now he would have him to understand (and what he said he was ready, if required, to make out by witnesses),

1. That he came up to Jerusalem on purpose to worship God in peace and holiness, so far was he from any design to move sedi-

tion among the people, or to profane the temple. He came to keep up his communion with the Jews, not to put any affront upon them.

2. That it was but twelve days since he came up to Jerusalem, and he had been six days a prisoner; he was alone, and it could not be supposed that in so short a time he could do the mischief they charged upon him. And, as for what he had done in other countries, they knew nothing of it but by uncertain report, by which the matter was very unfairly represented.

3. That he had demeaned himself at Jerusalem very quietly and peaceably, and had made no manner of stir. If it had been true (as they alleged) that he was a *mover of sedition among all the Jews*, surely he would have been industrious to make a party at Jerusalem: but he did not do so. He was in the temple, attending the public service there. He was in the synagogues where the law was read and opened. He went about in the city among his relations and friends, and conversed freely in the places of concourse; and he was a man of a great genius and an active spirit, and yet they could not charge him with offering any thing either against the faith or against the peace of the Jewish church. (1.) He had nothing in him of a contradicting spirit, as the movers of sedition have; he had no disposition to quarrel or oppose. They never found him *disputing with any man*, either affronting the learned with captious cavils or perplexing the weak and simple with curious subtleties. He was ready, if asked, to give a reason of his own hope, and to give instruction to others; but he never picked a quarrel with any man about his religion, nor made that the subject of debate, and controversy, and perverse dispute, which ought always to be treated of with humility and reverence, with meekness and love. (2.) He had nothing in him of a turbulent spirit: "They never found me *raising up the people*, by incensing them against their governors in church or state or suggesting to them fears and jealousies concerning public affairs, nor by setting them at variance one with another or sowing discord among them." He behaved as became a Christian and minister, with love and quietness, and due subjection to lawful authority. The weapons of his warfare were not carnal, nor did he ever mention or think of such a thing as taking up arms for the propagating of the gospel or the defence of the preachers of it; though he could have made, perhaps, as strong a party among the common people as his adversaries, yet he never attempted it.

4. That as to what they had charged him with, of moving sedition in other countries, he was wholly innocent, and they could not make good the charge (v. 13): *Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me*. Hereby, (1.) He maintains his own in-



nocency; for when he says, They cannot prove it, he means, The matter is not so. He was no enemy to the public peace; he had done no real prejudice, but a great deal of real service, and would gladly have done more, to the nation of the Jews. He was so far from having any antipathy to them that he had the strongest affection imaginable for them, and a most passionate desire for their welfare, Rom. ix. 1—3. (2.) He bemoans his own calamity, that he was accused of those things which could not be proved against him. And it has often been the lot of very worthy good men to be thus injured, to have things laid to their charge which they are at the greatest distance from and abhor the thought of. But, while they are lamenting this calamity, this may be their rejoicing, even the *testimony of their consciences* concerning their integrity. (3.) He shows the iniquity of his prosecutors, who said that which they knew they could not prove, and thereby did him wrong in his name, liberty, and life, and did the judge wrong too, in imposing upon him, and doing what in them lay to pervert his judgment. (4.) He appeals to the equity of his judge, and awakens him to look about him, that he might not be drawn into a snare by the violence of the prosecution. The judge must give sentence *secundum allegata et probata*—according to that which is not only alleged but proved, and therefore must enquire, and make search, and ask diligently, whether the thing be true and certain (Deut. xiii. 14); he cannot otherwise give a right judgment.

III. He gives a fair and just account of himself, which does at once both clear him from crime and likewise intimate what was the true reason of their violence in prosecuting him.

1. He acknowledges himself to be one whom they looked upon as a heretic, and that was the reason of their spleen against him. The chief captain had observed, and the governor now cannot but observe, an uncommon violence and fury in his prosecutors, which they know not what to make of, but, guessing at the crime by the cry, conclude he must needs have been a very bad man only for that reason. Now Paul here unriddles the matter: I confess that *in the way which they call heresy*—or a sect, so worship I the God of my fathers. The controversy is in a matter of religion, and such controversies are commonly managed with most fury and violence. Note, It is no new thing for the right way of worshipping God to be called heresy; and for the best of God's servants to be stigmatized and run down as sectaries. The reformed churches are called heretical ones by those who themselves hate to be reformed, and are themselves heretics. Let us therefore never be driven off from any good way by its being put into an ill name; for true and pure Christianity is never the worse, nor to be the worse thought of,

for its being called heresy; no, not though it be called so by the high priest and the elders.

2. He vindicates himself from this imputation. They call Paul a heretic, but he is not so; for,

(1.) He worships the God of his fathers, and therefore is right in the object of his worship. He does not say, *Let us go after other gods, which we have not known, and let us serve them*, as the false prophet is supposed to do, Deut. xiii. 2. If so, they might justly call his way heresy, a drawing of them aside into a by-path, and a dangerous one; but he worships the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not only the God whom they worshipped, but the God who took them into covenant with himself, and was and would be called their God. Paul adheres to that covenant, and sets up no other in opposition to it. The promise made unto the fathers Paul preached as fulfilled to the children (ch. xiii. 32, 33), and so directed both his own devotions and those of others to God, as the God of their fathers. He also refers to the practice of all his pious ancestors: *I worship the same God that all my fathers worshipped*. His religion was so far from being chargeable with novelty that it gloried in its antiquity, and in an uninterrupted succession of its professors. Note, It is very comfortable in our worshipping God to have an eye to him as the God of our fathers. Our fathers trusted in him, and were owned by him, and he engaged to be their God, and the God of their seed. He approved himself theirs, and therefore, if we serve him as they did, he will be ours; what an emphasis is laid upon this, *He is my father's God, and I will exalt him!* Exod. xv. 2.

(2.) He believes all things which are written in the law and the prophets, and therefore is right in the rule of his worship. His religion is grounded upon, and governed by, the holy scriptures; they are his oracle and touchstone, and he speaks and acts according to them. He receives the scriptures entire, and believes all things that are there written; and he receives them pure, for he says no other things than what are contained in them, as he explains himself, ch. xxvi. 22. He sets not up any other rule of faith or practice but the scriptures—not tradition, nor the authority of the church, nor the infallibility of any man or company of men on earth, nor the light within, nor human reason; but divine revelation, as it is in the scripture, is that which he resolves to live and die by, and therefore he is not a heretic.

(3.) He has his eye upon a future state, and is a believing expectant of that, and therefore is right in the end of his worship. Those that turn aside to heresy have a regard to this world, and some secular interest, but Paul aims to make heaven of his religion, and neither more nor less (v. 15). "*I have hope towards God*, all my expectation is from him, and therefore all my desire is towards him



and all my dependence upon him; my hope is towards God and not towards the world, towards another world and not towards this. I depend upon God and upon his power, that *there shall be a resurrection of the dead at the end of time, of all, both the just and unjust*; and the great thing I aim at in my religion is to obtain a joyful and happy resurrection, a share in the resurrection of the just." Observe here, [1.] That there shall be a resurrection of the dead, the dead bodies of men, of all men from the beginning to the end of time. It is certain, not only that the soul does not die with the body, but that the body itself shall live again; we have not only another life to live when our present life is at an end, but there is to be another world, which shall commence when this world is at an end, into which all the children of men must enter at once by a resurrection from the dead, as they entered into this, one after another, by their birth. [2.] It shall be a resurrection *both of the just and of the unjust*, the sanctified and the unsanctified, of those that did well, and to them our Saviour has told us that it will be a *resurrection of life*; and of those that did evil, and to them that it will be a resurrection of condemnation, John v. 29. See Dan. xii. 2. This implies that it will be a resurrection to a final judgment, by which all the children of men will be determined to everlasting happiness or misery in a world of retribution, according to what they were and what they did in this state of probation and preparation. The just shall rise by virtue of their union with Christ as their head; the unjust shall rise by virtue of Christ's dominion over them as their Judge. [3.] God is to be depended upon for the resurrection of the dead: I have *hope towards God*, and in God, that there shall be a resurrection; it shall be effected by the almighty power of God, in performance of the word which God hath spoken; so that those who doubt of it betray their ignorance both of the scriptures and of the power of God, Matt. xxii. 29. [4.] The resurrection of the dead is a fundamental article of our creed, as it was also of that of the Jewish church. It is what *they themselves also allow*; nay, it was the expectation of the ancient patriarchs, witness Job's confession of his faith; but it is more clearly revealed and more fully confirmed by the gospel, and therefore those who believed it should have been thankful to the preachers of the gospel for their explications and proofs of it, instead of opposing them. [5.] In all our religion we ought to have an eye to the other world, and to serve God in all instances with a confidence in him *that there will be a resurrection of the dead*, doing all in preparation for that, and expecting our recompence in that.

(4.) His conversation is of a piece with his devotion (v. 16): *And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men* Pro-

phets and their doctrine were to be tried by their fruits. Paul was far from having made shipwreck of a good conscience, and therefore it is not likely he has made shipwreck of the faith, the mystery of which is best held in a pure conscience. This protestation of Paul's is to the same purport with that which he made before the high priest (ch. xxiii. 1): *I have lived in all good conscience*; and this was his rejoicing. Observe, [1.] What was Paul's aim and desire: *To have a conscience void of offence*. Either, *First*, "A conscience not offending; not informing me wrong, nor flattering me, nor dealing deceitfully with me, nor in any thing misleading me." Or, *Secondly*, A conscience not offended; it is like Job's resolution, "*My heart shall not reproach me*, that is, I will never give it any occasion to do so. This is what I am ambitious of, to keep upon good terms with my own conscience, that it may have no cause either to question the goodness of my spiritual state or to quarrel with me for any particular action. I am as careful not to offend my conscience as I am not to offend a friend with whom I daily converse; nay, as I am not to offend a magistrate whose authority I am under, and to whom I am accountable; for conscience is God's deputy in my soul." [2.] What was his care and endeavour, in pursuance of this "*I exercise myself—ἀσκήω*. I make it my constant business, and govern myself by this intention; I discipline myself, and live by rule" (those that did so were called *ascetics*, from the word here used), "abstain from many a thing which my inclination leads me to, and abound in all the exercises of religion that are most spiritual, with this in my eye, that I may keep peace with my own conscience." [3.] The extent of this care: *First*, To all times: *To have always a conscience void of offence*, always void of gross offence; for though Paul was conscious to himself that he *had not yet attained perfection*, and the evil that he would not do yet he did, yet he was *innocent from the great transgression*. Sins of infirmity are uneasy to conscience, but they do not wound it, and waste it, as presumptuous sins do; and, though offence may be given to conscience, yet care must be taken that it be not an abiding offence, but that by the renewed acts of faith and repentance the matter may be taken up again quickly. This however we must always exercise ourselves in, and, though we come short, we must follow after. *Secondly*, To all things: *Both towards God, and towards man*. His conscientious care extended itself to the whole of his duty, and he was afraid of breaking the law of love either to God or his neighbour. Conscience, like the magistrate, is *custos utriusque tabulæ—the guardian of each table*. We must be very cautious that we do not think, or speak, or do any thing amiss, either against God or man, 2 Cor. viii. 21. [4.] The inducement to it: *Herein, ἐν τούτῳ, for this cause*; so it may be read "Because I look

for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, therefore I thus exercise myself." The consideration of the future state should engage us to be universally conscientious in our present state.

IV. Having made confession of his faith, he gives a plain and faithful account of his case, and of the wrong done him by his persecutors. Twice he had been rescued by the chief captain out of the hands of the Jews, when they were ready to pull him to pieces, and he challenges them to prove him guilty of any crime either time.

1. In the temple. Here they fell furiously upon him as an enemy to their nation and the temple, *ch. xxi. 28*. But was there any colour for the charge? No, but evidence sufficient against it. (1.) It was very hard to accuse him as an *enemy to their nation*, when after long absence from Jerusalem he came to *bring alms to his nation*, money which (though he had need enough himself of it) he had collected among his friends, for the relief of the poor at Jerusalem. He not only had no malice to that people, but he had a very charitable concern for them, and was ready to do them all good offices; and were they his adversaries for his love? *Ps. cix. 4*. (2.) It was very hard to accuse him of having profaned the temple when he brought offerings to the temple, and was himself at charges therein (*ch. xxi. 24*), and was found *purifying himself in the temple*, according to the law *v. 18*), and that in a very quiet decent manner, *neither with multitude nor with tumult*. Though he was a man so much talked of, he was far from coveting to show himself when he came to Jerusalem, or to be crowded after, but went to the temple, as much as was possible, *incognito*. They were Jews from Asia, his enemies, that caused him to be taken notice of; they had no pretence to make a tumult and raise a multitude against him, for he had neither multitude nor tumult for him. And as to what was perhaps suggested to Felix that he had brought Greeks into the temple, contrary to their law, and the governor ought to reckon with him for that, the Romans having stipulated with the nations that submitted to them to preserve them in their religion, he challenges them to prove it (*v. 19*): "Those Jews of Asia ought to have been *here before thee*, that they might have been examined, whether *they had ought against me*, that they would stand by and swear to;" for some that will not scruple to tell a lie have such heavings of conscience that they scruple confirming it with an oath.

2. In the council: "Since the Jews of Asia are not here to prove any thing upon me done amiss in the temple, let *these same* that are *here*, the high priest and the elders, say whether they have *found any evil doing in me*, or whether I was guilty of any misdemeanor *when I stood before the council*, when also they were ready to pull me in pieces, *v. 20*. When I was there, they could not

take offence at any thing I said; for all I said was, *Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day (v. 21)*, which gave no offence to any one but the Sadducees. This I hope was no crime, that I stuck to that which is the faith of the whole Jewish church, excepting those whom they themselves call heretics."

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that way*, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. 23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. 24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. 26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

We have here the result of Paul's trial before Felix, and what was the consequence of it.

I. Felix adjourned the cause, and took further time to consider of it (*v. 22*): He had *a more perfect knowledge of that way* which the Jews called heresy than the high priest and the elders thought he had. He understood something of the Christian religion; for, living at Cæsarea, where Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was, who was a Christian, from him and others he had got a notion of Christianity, that it was not such an evil thing as it was represented. He himself knew some of that way to be honest good men, and very conscientious, and therefore he put off the prosecutors with an excuse: "When the chief captain shall come down hither, I will know the uttermost of your matter or I shall know the truth, whether this Paul did go about to raise sedition or no; you are parties, he is an indifferent person. Either Paul deserves to be punished for raising the tumult, or you do for doing it yourselves



and then charging it upon him; and I will hear what he says, and determine accordingly between you." Now, 1. It was a disappointment to the high priest and the elders that Paul was not condemned, or remitted to their judgment, which they wished for and expected. But thus sometimes God restrains the wrath of his people's enemies by the agency, not of their friends, but of such as are strangers to them. And though they be so, if they have but some *knowledge of their way*, they cannot but appear for their protection. 2. It was an injury to Paul that he was not released. Felix ought to have *avenged him of his adversaries*, when he so plainly saw there was nothing but malice in the prosecution, and to have delivered *him out of the hand of the wicked*, according to the duty of a judge, Ps. lxxxii. 4. But he was a judge that neither feared God nor regarded man, and what good could be expected from him? It is a wrong not only to deny justice, but to delay it.

II. He detained the prisoner in custody, and would not take bail for him; else here at Caesarea Paul had friends enough that would gladly have been his security. Felix thought a man of such a public character as Paul was had many friends, as well as many enemies, and he might have an opportunity of obliging them, or making a hand of them, if he did not presently release him, and yet did show him countenance; and therefore, 1. He continued him a prisoner, commanded a centurion or captain to keep him, v. 23. He did not commit him to the common jail, but, being first made an army-prisoner, he shall still be so. 2. Yet he took care he should be a *prisoner at large—in libera custodia*; his keeper must let him have liberty, not bind him nor lock him up, but make his confinement as easy to him as possible; let him have the liberty of the castle, and, perhaps, he means liberty to take the air, or go abroad upon his parole: and Paul was such an honest man that they might take his word for his return. The high priest and the elders grudged him his life, but Felix generously allows him a sort of liberty; for he had not those prejudices against him and his way that they had. He also gave orders that none of his friends should be hindered from coming to him; the centurion must not forbid any of his acquaintances from ministering to him; and a man's prison is as it were his own house if he has but his friends about him.

III. He had frequent conversation with him afterwards in private, once particularly, not long after his public trial, v. 24, 25. Observe,

1. With what design *Felix sent for Paul*. He had a mind to have some talk with him *concerning the faith in Christ*, the Christian religion; he had some knowledge of that way, but he desired to have an account of it from Paul, who was so celebrated a preacher

of that faith, above the rest. Those that would enlarge their knowledge must discourse with men of their own profession, and those that would be acquainted with any profession should consult those that excel in the knowledge of it; and therefore Felix has a mind to talk with Paul more freely than he could in open court, where he observed Paul upon his guard, *concerning the faith of Christ*; and this only to satisfy his curiosity, or rather the curiosity of *his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess*, daughter of Herod Agrippa, that was eaten of worms. Being educated in the Jewish religion, she was more inquisitive concerning the Christian religion, which pretended to be the perfection of that, and desired to hear Paul discourse of it. But it was no great matter what religion she was of; for, whatever it was, she was a reproach and scandal to it—a Jewess, but an adulteress; she was another man's wife when Felix took her to be his wife, and she lived with him in whoredom and was noted for an impudent woman, yet she desires to hear *concerning the faith of Christ*. Many are fond of new notions and speculations in religion, and can hear and speak of them with pleasure, who yet hate to come under the power and influence of religion, can be content to have their judgments informed but not their lives reformed.

2. What the account was which Paul gave him of the Christian religion; by the idea he had of it, he expected to be amused with a mystical divinity, but, as Paul represents it to him, he is alarmed with a practical divinity. Paul, being asked *concerning the faith in Christ, reasoned* (for Paul was always a rational preacher) *concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*. It is probable that he mentioned the peculiar doctrines of Christianity concerning the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and his being the *Mediator between God and man*; but he hastened to his application, in which he designed to come home to the consciences of his hearers.

(1.) He discoursed with clearness and warmth of *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*: and here he showed, [1.] That the faith in Christ is designed to enforce upon the children of men the great laws of justice and temperance. *The grace of God teacheth us to live soberly and righteously*, Tit. ii. 12. Justice and temperance were celebrated virtues among the heathen moralists; if the doctrine Paul preaches, which Felix has heard of as proclaiming liberty, will but free him from an obligation to these, he will readily embrace it: "No," says Paul, "it is so far from doing so that it strengthens the obligations of those sacred laws; it binds all under the highest penalties to be *honest in all their dealings*, and to *render to all their due*; to *deny themselves*, and to *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection*." The world and the flesh being in



our baptism renounced, all our pursuits of the world and all our gratifications of the desires of the body are to be under the regulations of religion. *Paul reasoned of righteousness and temperance*, to convince Felix of his unrighteousness and intemperance, of which he had been notoriously guilty, that, seeing the odiousness of them, and his obnoxiousness to the wrath of God for them (Eph. v. 6), he might enquire concerning the faith of Christ, with a resolution to embrace it. [2.] That by the doctrine of Christ is discovered to us the judgment to come, by the sentence of which the everlasting state of all the children of men will be finally and irreversibly determined. Men have their day now, Felix hath his; but God's day is coming, *when every one shall give account of himself to God, the Judge of all*. Paul reasoned concerning this; that is, he showed what reason we have to believe *that there is a judgment to come*, and what reason we have, in consideration thereof, to be religious.

(2.) From this account of the heads of Paul's discourse we may gather, [1.] That Paul in his preaching had no respect to persons, for the word of God, which he preached, has not: he urged the same convictions and instructions upon the Roman governor that he did upon other people. [2.] That Paul in his preaching aimed at the consciences of men, and came close to them, sought not to please their fancy nor to gratify their curiosity, but led them to a sight of their sins and a sense of their duty and interest. [3.] That Paul preferred the serving of Christ, and the saving of souls, before his own safety. He lay at the mercy of Felix, who had power (as Pilate said) *to crucify him* (or, which was as bad, to deliver him back to the Jews), *and he had power to release him*. Now when Paul had his ear, and had him in a good humour, he had a fair opportunity of ingratiating himself with him, and obtaining a release, nay, and of incensing him against his prosecutors: and, on the contrary, if he disoblged him, and put him out of humour, he might do himself a great diskindness by it; but he is wholly negligent of these considerations, and is intent upon doing good, at least discharging his duty. [4.] That Paul was willing to take pains, and run hazards, in his work, even where there was little probability of doing good. Felix and Drusilla were such hardened sinners that it was not at all likely they should be brought to repentance by Paul's preaching, especially under such disadvantages; and yet Paul deals with them as one that did not despair of them. Let the watchman give fair warning, and then they have delivered their own souls, though they should not prevail to deliver the souls they watch for.

3. What impressions Paul's discourse made upon this great but wicked man: *Felix trembled*, *ἐκφοβος γενόμενος*—*being put into a fright*, or made a terror to himself, a *magor-missabib*, as Pashur, Jer. xx. 3, 4. Paul never trem-

bled before him, but he was made to tremble before Paul. "If this be so, as Paul says, what will become of me in another world? If the unrighteous and intemperate will be condemned in the judgment to come, I am undone, for ever undone, unless I lead a new course of life." We do not find that Drusilla trembled, though she was equally guilty, for she was a Jewess, and depended upon the ceremonial law, which she adhered to the observance of, to justify her; but Felix for the present could fasten upon nothing to pacify his conscience, and therefore trembled. See here, (1.) The power of the word of God when it comes with commission; it is searching, it is startling, it can strike a terror into the heart of the most proud and daring sinner, by *setting his sins in order before him*, and showing him *the terrors of the Lord*. (2.) The workings of natural conscience; when it is startled and awakened, it fills the soul with horror and amazement at its own deformity and danger. Those that are themselves *the terror of the mighty in the land of the living* have hereby been made a terror to themselves. A prospect of the judgment to come is enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble, as when it comes indeed it will make *the mighty men and the chief captains* to call in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them.

4. How Felix struggled to get clear of these impressions, and to shake off the terror of his convictions; he did by them as he did by Paul's prosecutors (v. 25), *he deferred them*; he said, *Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee*. (1.) He trembled and that was all. Paul's trembling (ch. ix. 6), and the jailer's (ch. xvi. 29), ended in their conversion, but this of Felix did not. Many are startled by the word of God who are not effectually changed by it. Many are in fear of the consequences of sin, and yet continue in love and league with sin. (2.) He did not fight against his convictions, nor fly in the face of the word or of the preacher of it, to be revenged on them for making his conscience fly in his face; he did not say to Paul, as Amaziah to the prophet, *Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten?* He did not threaten him with a closer confinement, or with death, for touching him (as John Baptist did Herod) in the sore place. But, (3.) He artfully shifted off his convictions by putting off the prosecution of them to another time. He has nothing to object against what Paul has said; it is weighty and worth considering. But, like a sorry debtor, he begs a day; Paul has spent himself, and has tired him and his lady, and therefore, *"Go thy way for this time—break off here, business calls me away; but when I have a convenient season, and have nothing else to do, I will call for thee, and hear what thou hast further to say."* Note, [1.] Many lose all the benefit of their convictions for want of striking while the iron is hot. If Felix, now that he trembled, had but asked, as Paul and



the jailer did when they trembled, *What shall I do?* he might have been brought to the faith of Christ, and have been a *Felix* indeed, *happy* for ever; but, by dropping his convictions now, he lost them for ever, and himself with them. [2.] In the affairs of our souls, delays are dangerous; nothing is of more fatal consequence than men's putting off their conversion from time to time. They will repent, and turn to God, but not yet; the matter is adjourned to some more convenient season, when such a business or affair is compassed, when they are so much older; and then convictions cool and wear off, good purposes prove to no purpose, and they are more hardened than ever in their evil way. Felix put off this matter to a more convenient season, but we do not find that this more convenient season ever came; for the devil cozens us of all our time by cozening us of the present time. The present season is, without doubt, the most convenient season. *Behold, now is the accepted time. To-day if you will hear his voice.*

IV. After all, he detained him a prisoner, and left him so, when two years after he was removed from the government, v. 26, 27. He was convinced in his conscience that Paul had done *nothing worthy of death or of bonds*, and yet had not the honesty to release him. To little purpose had Paul reasoned with him about righteousness, though he then trembled at the thought of his own iniquity, who could thus persist in such a palpable piece of injustice. But here we are told what principles he was governed by herein; and they were such as make the matter yet much worse. 1. The love of money. He would not release Paul because he hoped to make his market of him, and that at length his friends would make a purse to purchase his liberty, and then he would satisfy his conscience by releasing him when he could withal satisfy his covetousness by it; but he cannot find in his heart to do his duty as a judge, unless he can get money by it: *He hoped that money would have been given him of Paul*, or somebody for him, and then he would have loosed him, and set him at liberty. In hopes of this, he detains him a prisoner, and *sends for him the oftener, and communes with him*; not any more about the faith of Christ (he had had enough of that, and of the judgment to come; Paul must not return to those subjects, nor go on with them), but about his discharge, or ransom rather, out of his present captivity. He cannot for shame ask Paul what he will give him to release him, but he sends for him to feel his pulse, and gives him an opportunity to ask what he would take to release him. And now we see what became of his promise both to Paul and to himself, that he would hear more of Christ at some other convenient season. Here were many seasons convenient enough to have talked that matter through, but nothing is done in it; all his business

now is to get money by Paul, not to get the knowledge of Christ by him. Note, It is just with God to say concerning those who trifle with their convictions, and think they can have the grace of God at command when they please, *My Spirit shall no more strive with them*. When men will not hear God's voice *to-day, while it is called to-day*, the heart is commonly *hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*. Paul was but a poor man himself, *silver and gold he had none* to give, to purchase his liberty; but Felix knew there were those who wished well to him who were able to assist him. He having lately collected a great deal of money for the poor saints to relieve them, it might also be expected that the rich saints should contribute some to release him, and I wonder it was not done. Though Paul is to be commended that he would not offer money to Felix, nor beg money of the churches (his great and generous soul disdained both), yet I know not whether his friends are to be commended, nay, whether they can be justified, in not doing it for him. They ought to have solicited the governor as pressingly for him as his enemies did against him: and if a *gift was necessary to make room for them* (as Solomon speaks) and to bring them before great men, they might lawfully have brought it. I ought not to bribe a man to do an unjust thing, but, if he will not do me justice without a fee, it is but doing myself justice to give it to him; and, if they might do it, it was a shame they did not do it. I blush for them, that they would let such an eminent and useful man as Paul lie in the jail, when a little money would have fetched him out, and restored him to his usefulness again. The Christians here at Cæsarea, where he now was, had parted with their tears to prevent his going to the prison (ch. xxi. 13), and could they not find in their hearts to part with their money to help him out? Yet there might be a providence of God in it; Paul's bonds must be for the furtherance of the gospel of Christ, and therefore he must continue in bonds. However, this will not excuse Felix, who ought to have released an innocent man, without demanding or accepting any thing for it: the judge that will not do right without a bribe will no doubt do wrong for a bribe. 2. Men-pleasing. Felix was recalled from his government about *two years after this*, and Porcius Festus was put in his place, and one should have expected he would have at least concluded his government with this act of justice, the release of Paul, but he did not; he *left Paul bound*, and the reason here given is because he was *willing to do the Jews a pleasure*. Though he would not deliver him *to death, to please them*, yet he would continue him a prisoner rather than offend them; and he did it in hope hereby to atone for the many offences he had done against them. He did not think Paul had either

interest or inclination to complain of him at court, for detaining him so long in custody, against all law and equity; but he was jealous of the high priest and elders, that they would be his accusers to the emperor for the wrongs he had done them, and therefore hopes by gratifying them in this matter to stop their mouths. Thus those who do some base things are tempted to do more to screen themselves and bear them out. If Felix had not injured the Jews, he needed not to have done this to please them; but, when he had done it, it seems he did not gain his point. The Jews, notwithstanding this, accused him to the emperor, and some historians say he was sent bound to Rome by Festus; and, if so, surely his remembering how light he had made of Paul's bonds would help to make his own chain heavy. Those that aim to please God by doing good will have what they aim at; but so will not those that seek to please men by doing evil.

## CHAP. XXV.

Some think that Felix was turned out, and Festus succeeded him, quickly after Paul's imprisonment, and that the two years mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter are to be reckoned from the beginning of Nero's reign; but it seems more natural to compute them from Paul's being delivered into the hands of Felix. However, we have here much the same management of Paul's case as we had in the foregoing chapter; cognizance is here taken of it, I. By Festus the governor; it is brought before him by the Jews, ver. 1-3. The hearing of it is appointed to be, not at Jerusalem, as the Jews desired, out at Cæsarea, ver. 4-6. The Jews appear against Paul and accuse him (ver. 7), but he stands upon his own innocency (ver. 8); and to avoid the removing of the cause to Jerusalem, to which he was pressed to consent, he at length appeals to Cæsar, ver. 9-12. II. By king Agrippa, to whom Festus relates his case (ver. 13-21), and Agrippa desires he might have the hearing of it himself, ver. 22. The court is accordingly set, and Paul brought to the bar (ver. 23), and Festus opens the cause (ver. 24-27), to introduce Paul's defence in the next chapter.

**N**OW when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cæsarea to Jerusalem. 2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, 3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. 4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cæsarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*. 5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. 6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cæsarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. 7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

While he answered for himself,

Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended any thing at all. 9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar. 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go.

We commonly say, "New lords, new laws, new customs;" but here was a new governor, and yet Paul had the same treatment from him that he had from the former, and no better. Festus, like Felix, is not so just to him as he should have been, for he does not release him; and yet not so unjust to him as the Jews would have had him to be, for he will not condemn him to die, nor expose him to their rage. Here is,

I. The pressing application which the high priest and other Jews used with the governor to persuade him to abandon Paul; for to send him to Jerusalem was in effect to abandon him. 1. See how speedy they were in their applications to Festus concerning Paul. As soon as ever he *had come into the province*, and had taken possession of the government, into which, probably, he was installed at Cæsarea, within *three days he went up to Jerusalem*, to show himself there, and presently the priests were upon him to proceed against Paul. He staid *three days at Cæsarea*, where Paul was a prisoner, and we do not find that in that time Paul made any application to him to release him, though, no doubt, he could have made good friends, that he might hope to have prevailed by, but as soon as ever he comes up to Jerusalem the priests are in all haste to make an interest with him against Paul. See how restless a thing malice is. Paul more patiently bears the lengthening out of his imprisonment than his enemies do the delay of his prosecution even to the death. 2. See how spiteful they were in their application. They *informed the governor against Paul* (v. 2) before he was brought upon a fair trial, that so they might, if possible, prejudice the cause with the governor, and make him a party who was to be the judge. But this artifice,



though base enough, they could not confide in; for the governor would be sure to hear him himself, and then all their informations against him would fall to the ground; and therefore they form another project much more base, and that is to assassinate Paul before he came upon his trial. These inhuman hellish methods, which all the world profess at least to abhor, have these persecutors recourse to, to gratify their malice against the gospel of Christ, and this too under colour of zeal for Moses. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*—Such was their dire religious zeal. 3. See how specious the pretence was. Now that the governor was himself at Jerusalem they desired he would send for Paul thither, and try him there, which would save the prosecutors a great deal of labour, and looked most reasonable, because he was charged with having profaned the temple at Jerusalem, and it is usual for criminals to be tried in the court where the fact was committed; but that which they designed was to way-lay him as he was brought up, and to murder him upon the road, supposing that he would not be brought up under so strong a guard as he was sent down with, or that the officers that were to bring him up might be bribed to give them an opportunity for their wickedness. It is said, *They desired favour against Paul*. The business of prosecutors is to demand justice against one that they suppose to be a criminal, and, if he be not proved so, it is as much justice to acquit him as it is to condemn him if he be. But to desire favour against a prisoner, and from the judge too, who ought to be of counsel for him, is a very impudent thing. The favour ought to be for the prisoner, *in favorem vitæ*—to favour his life, but here they desire it against him. They will take it as a favour if the governor will but condemn Paul, though they can prove no crime upon him.

II. The governor's resolution that Paul shall take his trial at Cæsarea, where he now is, v. 4, 5. See how he manages the prosecutors. 1. He will not do them the kindness to send for him to Jerusalem; no, he gave orders that Paul should be kept at Cæsarea. It does not appear that he had any suspicion, much less any certain information, of their bloody design to murder him by the way, as the chief captain had when he sent him to Cæsarea (ch. xxiii. 30); but perhaps he was not willing so far to oblige the high priest and his party, or he would maintain the honour of his court at Cæsarea and require their attendance there, or he was not willing to be at the trouble or charge of bringing Paul up; whatever was his reason for refusing it, God made use of it as a means of preserving Paul out of the hands of his enemies. Perhaps now they were more careful to keep their conspiracy secret than they had been before, that the discovery of it might not be now, as it was then, the defeat

of it. But though God does not, as then, bring it to light, yet he finds another way, as effectual, to bring it to nought, by inclining the heart of the governor, for some other reasons, not to remove Paul to Jerusalem. God is not tied to one method, in working out salvation for his people. He can suffer the designs against them to be concealed, and yet not suffer them to be accomplished; and can make even the carnal policies of great men to serve his gracious purposes. 2. Yet he will do them the justice to hear what they have to say against Paul, if they will go down to Cæsarea, and appear against him there: "*Let those among you who are able, able in body and purse for such a journey, or able in mind and tongue to manage the prosecution—let those among you who are fit to be managers, go down with me, and accuse this man; or, those who are competent witnesses, who are able to prove any thing criminal upon him, let them go and give in their evidence, if there be any such wickedness in him as you charge upon him.*" Festus will not take it for granted, as they desire he should, that there is wickedness in him, till it is proved upon him, and he has been heard in his own defence; but, if he be guilty, it lies upon them to prove him so.

III. Paul's trial before Festus. Festus staid at Jerusalem about ten days, and then went down to Cæsarea, and the prosecutors, it is likely, in his retinue; for he said they should go down with him; and, since they are so eager in the prosecution, he is willing this cause should be first called; and, that they may hasten home, he will despatch it the next day. Expedition in administering justice is very commendable, provided more haste be not made than good speed. Now here we have, 1. The court set, and the prisoner called to the bar. Festus sat in the judgment-seat, as he used to do when any cause was brought before him that was of consequence, and he commanded Paul to be brought, and to make his appearance, v. 6. Christ, to encourage his disciples and keep up their spirits under such awful trials of their courage as this was to Paul, promised them that the day should come when they should sit on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. 2. The prosecutors exhibiting their charges against the prisoner (v. 7): *The Jews stood round about*, which intimates that they were many. *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!* It intimates also that they were unanimous, they stood by one another, and resolved to hold together; and that they were intent upon the prosecution, and eager in clamouring against Paul. *They stood round about*, if possible, to frighten the judge into a compliance with their malicious design, or, at least, to frighten the prisoner, and to put him out of countenance; but in vain: he had too just and strong an assurance to be frightened by them. *They compassed me about like bees, but they are quenched as the fire of thorns*: Ps.



cxviii. 12. *When they stood round about him, they brought many and grievous accusations against Paul*, so it should be read. They charged him with high crimes and misdemeanors. The articles of impeachment were many, and contained things of a very heinous nature. They represented him to the court as black and odious as their wit and malice could contrive; but when they had opened the cause as they thought fit, and came to the evidence, there they failed: *they could not prove what they alleged against him*, for it was all false, and the complaints were groundless and unjust. Either the fact was not as they opened it, or there was no fault in it; *they laid to his charge things that he knew not*, nor they neither. It is no new thing for the most excellent ones of the earth to have all manner of evil said against them falsely, not only in the song of the drunkards, and upon the seat of the scornful, but even before the judgment-seat. 3. The prisoner's insisting upon his own vindication, v. 8. Whoever reproaches him, his own heart does not, and therefore his own tongue shall not; *though he die, he will not remove his integrity from him*. When it came to his turn to speak for himself, he insisted upon his general plea, Not guilty: *Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended any thing at all*. (1.) He had not violated the law of the Jews, nor taught any doctrine destructive of it. *Did he make void the law by faith?* No, *he established the law*. Preaching Christ, the end of the law, was no offence against the law. (2.) He had not profaned the temple, nor put any contempt at all upon the temple-service; his helping to set up the gospel temple did not at all offend against that temple which was a type of it. (3.) He had not offended against Cæsar, nor his government. By this it appears that now his cause being brought before the government, to curry favour with the governor and that they might seem friends to Cæsar, they had charged him with some instances of disaffection to the present higher powers, which obliged him to purge himself as to that matter, and to protest that he was no enemy to Cæsar, not so much as these were who charged him with being so.

IV. Paul's appeal to the emperor, and the occasion of it. This gave the cause a new turn. Whether he had before designed it, or whether it was a sudden resolve upon the present provocation, does not appear; but God puts it into his heart to do it, for the bringing about of that which he had said to him, *that he must bear witness to Christ at Rome*, for there the emperor's court was, *ch. xxiii. 11*. We have here,

1. The proposal which Festus made to Paul to go and take his trial at Jerusalem, v. 9. *Festus was willing to do the Jews a pleasure*, inclined to gratify the prosecutors rather than the prisoner, as far as he could go with safety against one that was a citizen of Rome. and

therefore asked him whether he would be willing to go up to Jerusalem, and clear himself there, where he had been accused, and where he might have his witnesses ready to vouch for him and confirm what he said. He would not offer to turn him over to the high priest and the sanhedrim, as the Jews would have had him; but, *Wilt thou go thither, and be judged of these things before me?* The president, if he had pleased, might have ordered him thither, but he would not do it without his own consent, which, if he could have wheedled him to give it, would have taken off the odium of it. In suffering times, the prudence of the Lord's people is tried as well as their patience; being sent forth therefore as sheep in the midst of wolves, they have need to be wise as serpents.

2. Paul's refusal to consent to it, and his reasons for it. He knew, if he were removed to Jerusalem, notwithstanding the utmost vigilance of the president, the Jews would find some means or other to be the death of him; and therefore desires to be excused, and pleads, (1.) That, as a citizen of Rome, it was most proper for him to be tried, not only by the president, but in that which was properly his court, which sat at Cæsarea: *I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged*, in the city which is the metropolis of the province. The court being held in Cæsar's name, and by his authority and commission, before one that was delegated by him, it might well be said to be his judgment seat, as, with us, all writs run in the name of the sovereign, in whose name all courts are held. Paul's owning that he ought to be judged at Cæsar's judgment-seat plainly proves that Christ's ministers are not exempted from the jurisdiction of the civil powers, but ought to be subject to them, as far as they can with a good conscience; and, if they be guilty of a real crime, to submit to their censure; if innocent, yet to submit to their enquiry, and to clear themselves before them. (2.) That, as a member of the Jewish nation, he had done nothing to make himself obnoxious to them: *To the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest*. It very well becomes those that are innocent to plead their innocence, and to insist upon it; it is a debt we owe to our own good name, not only not to bear false witness against ourselves, but to maintain our own integrity against those who bear false witness against us. (3.) That he was willing to abide by the rules of the law, and to let that take its course, v. 11. If he be guilty of any capital crime that deserves death, he will not offer either to make resistance or to make his escape, will neither flee from justice nor fight with it: "I refuse not to die, but will accept of the punishment of my iniquity." Not that all who have committed any thing worthy of death are obliged to accuse themselves, and offer themselves to justice; but, when they are accused and brought to justice, they ought to submit, and



to say both God and the government are righteous; as it is necessary that some should be made examples. But, if he be innocent, as he protests he is, "*If there be none of these things whereof these accuse me,—if the prosecution be malicious and they are resolved to have my blood right or wrong,—no man may deliver me unto them*, no, not the governor himself, without palpable injustice; for it is his business as much to protect the innocent as to punish the guilty;" and he claims his protection.

3. His appealing to court. Since he is continually in danger of the Jews, and one attempt made after another to get him into their hands, *whose tender mercies were cruel*, he flies to the *dernier resort*—the last refuge of oppressed innocency, and takes sanctuary there, since he cannot have justice done him in any other way: "*I appeal unto Cæsar*. Rather than be delivered to the Jews" (which Festus seems inclined to consent to) "let me be delivered to Nero." When David had divers times narrowly escaped the rage of Saul, and concluded he was such a restless enemy that he should *one day perish by his hands*, he came to this resolution, being in a manner compelled to it, *There is nothing better for me than to take shelter in the land of the Philistines*, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. So Paul here. But it is a hard case that a son of Abraham must be forced to appeal to a Philistine, to a Nero, from those who call themselves the seed of Abraham, and shall be safer in Gath or Rome than in Jerusalem. *How is the faithful city become a harlot!*

V. The judgment given upon the whole matter. Paul is neither released nor condemned. His enemies hoped the cause would be ended in his death; his friends hoped it would be ended in his deliverance; but it proved neither so nor so, they are both disappointed, the thing is left as it was. It is an instance of the slow steps which Providence sometimes takes, not bringing things to an issue so soon as we expect, by which we are often made ashamed both of our hopes and of our fears, and are kept still waiting on God. The cause had before been adjourned to another time, now to another place, to another court, that Paul's *tribulation might work patience*. 1. The president takes advice upon the matter: *He conferred with the council—μετὰ τοῦ συμβουλίου*, not with the council of the Jews (that is called *συνέδριον*), but with his own counsellors, who were always ready to assist the governor with their advice. *In multitude of counsellors there is safety*; and judges should consult both with themselves and others before they pass sentence. 2. He determines to send him to Rome. Some think Paul meant not an appeal to Cæsar's person, but only to his court, the sentence of which he would abide by, rather than be remitted to the Jew's council, and that Festus might have chosen whether he would have sent him to Rome, or, at least, whether he would have

joined issue with him upon the appeal. But it should seem, by what Agrippa said (*ch. xxvi. 32*), that *he might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Cæsar*—that, by the course of the Roman law, a Roman citizen might appeal at any time to a superior court, even to the supreme, as causes with us are removed by *certiorari*, and criminals by *habeas corpus*, and as appeals are often made to the house of peers. Festus, therefore, either of choice or of course, comes to this resolution: *Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? Unto Cæsar thou shalt go*. He found there was something very extraordinary in the case, which he was therefore afraid of giving judgment upon, either one way or other, and the knowledge of which he thought would be an entertainment to the emperor, and therefore he transmitted it to his cognizance. In our judgment before God those that by justifying themselves appeal to the law, to the law they shall go, and it will condemn them; but those that by repentance and faith appeal to the gospel, to the gospel they shall go, and it will save them.

13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cæsarea to salute Festus. 14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: 15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring to have judgment against him. 16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. 17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. 18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: 19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. 21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I

commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cæsar. 22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. 23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. 24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both of Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. 26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. 27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

We have here the preparation that was made for another hearing of Paul before king Agrippa, not in order to his giving judgment upon him, but in order to his giving advice concerning him, or rather only to gratify his curiosity. Christ had said, concerning his followers, *that they should be brought before governors and kings*. In the former part of this chapter Paul was brought before Festus the governor, here before Agrippa the king, for a testimony to both. Here is,

I. The kind and friendly visit which king Agrippa made to Festus, now upon his coming into the government in that province (v. 13): *After certain days, king Agrippa came to Cæsarea*. Here is a royal visit. Kings usually think it enough to send their ambassadors to congratulate their friends, but here was a king that came himself, that made the majesty of a prince yield to the satisfaction of a friend; for personal converse is the most pleasant among friends. Observe,

1. Who the visitants were. (1.) King Agrippa, the son of that Herod (surnamed *Agrippa*) who killed James the apostle, and was himself eaten of worms, and great grandson of Herod the Great, under whom Christ

was born. Josephus calls this *Agrippa the younger*; Claudius the emperor made him king of Chalcis, and *tetrarch of Trachonitis and Abylene*, mentioned Luke iii. 1. The Jewish writers speak of him, and (as Dr Lightfoot tells us) among other things relate this story of him, "That reading the law publicly, in the latter end of the year of release, as was enjoined, the king, when he came to those words (Deut. xvii. 15), *Thou shalt not set a stranger king over thee, who is not of thy brethren*, the tears ran down his cheeks, for he was not of the seed of Israel, which the congregation observing, cried out. Be of good comfort, king Agrippa, thou art our brother; for he was of their religion, though not of their blood." (2.) Bernice came with him. She was his own sister, now a widow, the widow of his uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, after whose death she lived with this brother of hers, who was suspected to be too familiar with her, and, after she was a second time married to Polemon king of Cilicia, she got to be divorced from him, and returned to her brother king Agrippa. Juvenal (*Sat.* 6) speaks of a diamond ring which Agrippa gave to Bernice, his incestuous sister:—

—Berenice  
In digito factus pretiosior; hunc dedit olim  
Barbarus incestus, dedit hunc Agrippa soror.  
That far-famed gem which on the finger glow'd  
Of Bernice (dearer thence), bestowed  
By an incestuous brother.—GRIFFITHS.

And both Tacitus and Suetonius speak of a criminal intimacy afterwards between her and Titus Vespasian. Drusilla, the wife of Felix, was another sister. Such lewd people were the great people generally in those times! *Say not that the former days were better*.

2. What the design of this visit was: they came to *salute Festus*, to give him joy of his new promotion, and to wish him joy in it; they came to compliment him upon his accession to the government, and to keep up a good correspondence with him, that Agrippa, who had the government of Galilee, might act in concert with Festus, who had the government of Judea; but it is probable they came as much to divert themselves as to show respect to him, and to share in the entertainments of his court, and to show their fine clothes, which would do vain people no good if they did not go abroad.

II. The account which Festus gave to king Agrippa of Paul and his case, which he gave.

1. To entertain him, and give him some diversion. It was a very remarkable story, and worth any man's hearing, not only as it was surprising and entertaining, but, if it were truly and fully told, very instructive and edifying; and it would be particularly acceptable to Agrippa, not only because he was a judge, and there were some points of law and practice in it well worth his notice, but much more as he was a Jew, and there were some points of religion in it much more deserving his cognizance.



2. To have his advice. *Festus* was but newly come to be a judge, at least to be a judge in these parts, and therefore was diffident of himself and of his own ability, and willing to have the counsel of those that were older and more experienced, especially in a matter that had so much difficulty in it as Paul's case seemed to have, and therefore he declared it to the king. Let us now see the particular account he gives to king Agrippa concerning Paul, v. 14—21.

(1.) He found him a prisoner when he came into the government of this province; and therefore could not of his own knowledge give an account of his cause from the beginning: *There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix*; and therefore, if there were any thing amiss in the first taking of him into custody, *Festus* is not to answer for that, for he found him in bonds. When *Felix*, to do the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound, though he knew him to be innocent, he knew not what he did, knew not but he might fall into worse hands than he did fall into, though they were none of the best.

(2.) That the Jewish sanhedrim were extremely set against him: "The chief priests and the elders informed me against him as a dangerous man, and not fit to live, and desired he might therefore be condemned to die." These being great pretenders to religion, and therefore to be supposed men of honour and honesty, *Festus* thinks he ought to give credit to them; but Agrippa knows them better than he does, and therefore *Festus* desires his advice in this matter.

(3.) That he had insisted upon the Roman law in favour of the prisoner, and would not condemn him unheard (v. 16): "*It is not the manner of the Romans, who herein govern themselves by the law of nature and the fundamental rules of justice, to deliver any man to die, to grant him to destruction*" (so the word is), "*to gratify his enemies with his destruction, before the accused has the accusers face to face, to confront their testimony, and have both licence and time given him to answer for himself.*" He seems to upbraid them as if they reflected upon the Romans and their government in asking such a thing, or expecting that they would condemn a man without trying him: "No," says he, "I would have you to know, whatever you may allow of among yourselves, the Romans allow not of such a piece of injustice among them." *Audi et alteram partem*—Hear the other side, had become a proverb among them. This rule we ought to be governed by in our private censures in common conversation; we must not give men bad characters, nor condemn their words and actions, till we have heard what is to be said in their vindication. See John vii. 51.

(4.) That he had brought him upon his trial, according to the duty of his place, v. 17. That he had been expeditious in it, and the prosecutors had no reason to complain of his

being dilatory, for as soon as ever they had come (and we are sure they lost no time) without any delay, on the morrow, he had brought on the cause. He had likewise tried him in the most solemn manner: He sat on the judgment-seat, as they used to do in weightier causes, while those that were of small moment they judged *de plano*—upon even ground. He called a great court on purpose for the trial of Paul, that the sentence might be definitive, and the cause ended.

(5.) That he was extremely disappointed in the charge they brought against him (v. 18, 19): *When the accusers stood up against him, and opened their indictment, they brought no accusations of such things as I supposed.*

[1.] He supposed by the eagerness of their prosecution, and their urging it thus upon the Roman governors one after another, First, That they had something to accuse him of that was dangerous either to private property or the public peace,—that they would undertake to prove him a robber, or a murderer, or a rebel against the Roman power,—that he had been in arms to head a sedition,—that if he were not that Egyptian who lately made an uproar, and commanded a party of cut-throats, as the chief captain supposed him to be, yet he was one of the same kidney. Such were the outcries against the primitive Christians, so loud, so fierce, that the standers-by, who judged of them by those outcries, could not but conclude them the worst of men; and to represent them so was the design of that clamour, as it was against our Saviour. Secondly, That they had something to accuse him of that was cognizable in the Roman courts, and which the governor was properly the judge of, as Gallio expected (ch. xviii. 14); otherwise it was absurd and ridiculous to trouble him with it, and really an affront to him.

[2.] But to his great surprise he finds the matter is neither so nor so; they had certain questions against him, instead of proofs and evidences against him. The worst they had to say against him was disputable whether it was a crime or no—moot-points, that would bear an endless debate, but had no tendency to fasten any guilt upon him, questions fitter for the schools than for the judgment-seat. And they were questions of their own superstition, so he calls their religion; or, rather, so he calls that part of their religion which Paul was charged with doing damage to. The Romans protected their religion according to their law, but not their superstition, nor the tradition of their elders. But the great question, it seems, was concerning one Jesus that was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. Some think the superstition he speaks of was the Christian religion, which Paul preached, and that he had the same notion of it that the Athenians had, that it was the introducing of a new demon, even Jesus. See how slightly this Roman speaks of Christ, and of his death and resurrection, and of the



great controversy between the Jews and the Christians whether he were the Messiah promised or no, and the great proof of his being the Messiah, his resurrection from the dead, as if it were no more than this, There was one Jesus that was dead, and Paul affirmed he was alive. In many causes issue is joined upon this question, whether such a person that has been long absent be living or dead, and proofs are brought on both sides; and Festus will have it thought that this is a matter of no more moment. Whereas this Jesus, whom he prides himself in being thus ignorant of, as if he were below his notice, is he that *was dead, and is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death*, Rev. i. 18. What Paul affirmed concerning Jesus, that he is alive, is a matter of such vast importance that if it be not true we are all undone.

(6.) That therefore he had proposed to Paul that the cause might be adjourned to the Jewish courts, as best able to take cognizance of an affair of this nature (v. 20): "*Because I doubted of such manner of questions, and thought myself unfit to judge of things I did not understand, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem*, appear before the great sanhedrim, *and there be judged of these matters.*" He would not force him to it, but would be glad if Paul would consent to it, that he might not have his conscience burdened with a cause of this nature.

(7.) That Paul had chosen rather to remove his cause to Rome than to Jerusalem, as expecting fairer play from the emperor than from the priests: "*He appealed to be reserved to the hearing of Augustus* (v. 21), having no other way to stop proceedings here in this inferior court; and therefore I commanded him to be kept a close prisoner till I might send him to Cæsar, for I did not see cause to refuse his appeal, but rather was pleased with it."

III. The bringing of him before Agrippa, that he might have the hearing of his cause.

1. The king desired it (v. 22): "I thank you for your account of him, but *I would also hear the man myself.*" Agrippa knows more of this matter, of the cause and of the person, than Festus does; he has heard of Paul, and knows of what vast concern this question is, which Festus makes such a jest of, whether Jesus be alive or no. And nothing would oblige him more than to hear Paul. Many great men think it below them to take cognizance of the matters of religion, except they can hear them like themselves in the judgment-seat. Agrippa would not for all the world have gone to a meeting to hear Paul preach, any more than Herod to hear Jesus; and yet they are both glad to have them brought before them, only to satisfy their curiosity. Perhaps Agrippa desired to hear him himself, that he might be in a capacity to do him a kindness, and yet did him none, only put some credit upon him.

2. Festus granted it: *To-morrow thou shalt hear him.* There was a good providence in this, for the encouragement of Paul, who seemed buried alive in his imprisonment, and deprived of all opportunities of doing good. We know not of any of his epistles that bore date from his prison at Cæsarea. What opportunity he had of doing good to his friends that visited him, and perhaps to a little congregation of them that visited him every Lord's-day, was but a low and narrow sphere of usefulness, so that he seemed to be thrown by as a *despised broken vessel, in which there was no pleasure*; but this gives him an opportunity of preaching Christ to a great congregation, and (which is more) to a congregation of great ones. Felix heard him in private concerning the faith of Christ. But Agrippa and Festus agree he shall be heard in public. And we have reason to think that his sermon in the next chapter, though it might not be so instrumental as some other of his sermons for the conversion of souls, redounded as much to the honour Christ and Christianity as any sermon he ever preached in his life.

3. Great preparation was made for it (v. 23). *The next day* there was a great appearance in the place of hearing, Paul and his cause being much talked of, and the more for their being much talked against.

(1.) Agrippa and Bernice took this opportunity to show themselves in state, and to make a figure, and perhaps for that end desired the occasion, that they might see and be seen; for *they came with great pomp*, richly dressed, with gold and pearls, and costly array; with a great retinue of footmen in rich liveries, which made a splendid show, and dazzled the eyes of the gazing crowd. They came *μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας*—*with great fancy*, so the word is. Note, Great pomp is but great fancy. It neither adds any real excellency, nor gains any real respect, but feeds a vain humour, which wise men would rather mortify than gratify. It is but a show, a dream, a fantastical thing (so the word signifies), superficial, and *it passeth away*. And the pomp of this appearance would put one for ever out of conceit with pomp, when the pomp which Agrippa and Bernice appeared in was, [1.] Stained by their lewd characters, and all the beauty of it sullied, and all virtuous people that knew them could not but condemn them in the midst of all this pomp as vile persons, Ps. xv. 4. [2.] Outshone by the real glory of the poor prisoner at the bar. What was the honour of their fine clothes, compared with that of his wisdom, and grace, and holiness, his courage and constancy in suffering for Christ! His bonds in so good a cause were more glorious than their chains of gold, and his guards than their equipage. Who would be fond of worldly pomp that here sees so bad a woman loaded with it and so good a man loaded with the reverse of it?

(2.) The chief captains and principal men



of the city took this opportunity to pay their respects to Festus and to his guests. It answered the end of a ball at court, it brought the fine folks together in their fine clothes, and served for an entertainment. It is probable that Festus sent Paul notice of it overnight, to be ready for a hearing the next morning before Agrippa. And such confidence had Paul in the promise of Christ, that it should be *given him in that same hour what he should speak*, that he complained not of the short warning, nor was put into confusion by it. I am apt to think that those who were to appear in pomp perplexed themselves more with care about their clothes than Paul, who was to appear as a prisoner, did with care about his cause; for he knew whom he had believed, and who stood by him.

IV. The speech with which Festus introduced the cause, when the court, or rather the audience, was set, which is much to the same purport with the account he had just now given to Agrippa. 1. He addressed himself respectfully to the company: "*King Agrippa, and all men who are here present with us.*" He speaks to all the men—*πάντες ἄνδρες*, as if he intended a tacit reflection upon Bernice, a woman, for appearing in a meeting of this nature; he does not refer any thing to her judgment nor desire her counsel; but, "*All you that are present that are men* (so the words are placed), I desire you to take cognizance of this matter." The word used is that which signifies men in distinction from women; what had Bernice to do here? 2. He represents the prisoner as one that the Jews had a very great spite against; not only the rulers, but the multitude of them, both at Jerusalem and here at Caesarea, cry out that he ought not to live any longer, for they think he has lived too long already, and if he live any longer it will be to do more mischief. They could not charge him with any capital crime, but they wanted to have him out of the way. 3. He confesses the prisoner's innocency; and it was much for the honour of Paul and his bonds that he had such a public acknowledgment as this from the mouth of his judge (v. 25): *I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death.* Upon a full hearing of the case, it appeared there was no evidence at all to support the indictment: and therefore, though he was inclinable enough to favour the prosecutors, yet his own conscience brought in Paul *not guilty*. And why did he not discharge him then, for he stood upon his deliverance? Why, truly, because he was so much clamoured against, and he feared the clamour would turn upon himself if he should release him. It is a pity but every man that has a conscience should have courage to act according to it. Or perhaps because there was so much smoke that he concluded there could not but be some fire, which would appear at last, and he would detain him a prisoner in expectation of it. 4. He acquaints them with the present state

of the case, that the prisoner had appealed to the emperor himself (whereby he put an honour upon his own cause, as knowing it not unworthy the cognizance of the greatest of men), and that he had admitted his appeal. *I have determined to send him.* And thus the cause now stood. 5. He desires their assistance in examining the matter calmly and impartially, now that there was no danger of their being interrupted, as he had been with the noisiness and outrage of the prosecutors—that he might have at least such an insight into the cause as was necessary to his stating it to the emperor, v. 26, 27. (1.) He thought it *unreasonable to send a prisoner*, especially so far as Rome, and *not withal to signify the crimes laid against him*, that the matter might be prepared as much as possible, and put in a readiness for the emperor's determination; for he is supposed to be a man of great business, and therefore every affair must be laid before him in as little compass as possible. (2.) He could not as yet write *any thing certain* concerning Paul; so confused were the informations that were given in against him, and so inconsistent, that Festus could make nothing at all of them. He therefore desired Paul might thus be publicly examined, that he might be advised by them what to write. See what a great deal of trouble and vexation those were put to, and to what delay, nay, and to what hazard, in the administration of public justice, who live at such a distance from Rome, and yet were subject to the emperor of Rome. The same was this nation of ours put to (which is about as far distant from Rome the other way) when it was in ecclesiastical affairs subject to the pope of Rome, and appeals were upon all occasions made to his court; and the same mischiefs, and a thousand worse, would those bring upon us who would again entangle us in that yoke of bondage.

## CHAP. XXVI.

We left Paul at the bar, and Festus, and Agrippa, and Bernice, and all the great men of the city of Caesarea, upon the bench, or about it, waiting to hear what he had to say for himself. Now in this chapter we have, 1. The account he gives of himself, in answer to the calumnies of the Jews. And in this, 1. His humble address to king Agrippa, and the compliment he passed upon him, ver. 1—3. 2. His account of his origin, and education, his profession as a Pharisee, and his adherence still to that which was then the main article of his creed, in distinction from the Sadducees, the "resurrection of the dead," however in rituals he had since departed from it, ver. 3—8. 3. Of his zeal against the Christian religion, and the professors of it, in the beginning of his time, ver. 9—11. 4. Of his miraculous conversion to the faith of Christ, ver. 12—16. 5. Of the commission he received from heaven to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, ver. 17, 18. 6. Of his proceedings pursuant to that commission, which had given this mighty offence to the Jews, ver. 19—21. 7. Of the doctrine which he had made it his business to preach to the Gentiles, which was so far from destroying the law and the prophets that it showed the fulfilling of both, ver. 22, 23. 11. The remarks that were made upon his apology. 1. Festus thought he never heard a man talk so madly, and slighted him as crazed, ver. 24. In answer to him, he denies the charge, and appeals to king Agrippa, ver. 25—27. 2. King Agrippa, being more closely and particularly dealt with, thinks he never heard a man talk more rationally and convincingly, and owns himself almost his convert (ver. 28), and Paul heartily wishes him so, ver. 29. 3. They all agreed that he was an innocent man, that he ought to be set at liberty, and that it was a pity he was provoked to put a bar in his own door by appealing to Caesar, ver. 30—32.

**T**HEN Agrippa said unto Paul,  
Thou art permitted to speak

for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: 2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: 3 Especially *because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.* 4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7 Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. 8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? 9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*. 11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

Agrippa was the most honourable person in the assembly, having the title of king bestowed upon him, though otherwise having only the power of other governors under the emperor, and, though not here superior, yet senior, to Festus; and therefore, Festus having opened the cause, Agrippa, as the mouth of the court, intimates to Paul a licence given him to *speaking for himself*, v. 1. Paul was silent till he had this liberty allowed him; for those are not the most forward to speak that are best prepared to speak and speak best. This was a favour which the Jews would not allow him, or not without difficulty; but Agrippa freely gives it to him. And Paul's cause was so good that he desired no more than to have liberty to speak for himself:

he needed no advocate, no Tertullus, to speak for him. Notice is taken of his gesture: *He stretched forth his hand*, as one that was under no consternation at all, but had perfect freedom and command of himself; it also intimates that he was in earnest, and expected their attention while he answered for himself. Observe, He did not insist upon his having appealed to Cæsar as an excuse for being silent, did not say, "I will be examined no more till I come to the emperor myself;" but cheerfully embraced the opportunity of doing honour to the cause he suffered for. If we must be ready to give a *reason of the hope that is in us to every man that asketh us*, much more to every man in authority, 1 Pet. iii. 15. Now in this former part of the speech,

1. Paul addressed himself with a very particular respect to Agrippa, v. 2, 3. He answered cheerfully before Felix, because he knew he had been *many years a judge to that nation*, ch. xxiv. 10. But his opinion of Agrippa goes further. Observe, 1. Being accused of the Jews, and having many base things laid to his charge, he is glad he has an opportunity of clearing himself; so far is he from imagining that his being an apostle exempted him from the jurisdiction of the civil powers. Magistracy is an ordinance of God, which we have all benefit by, and therefore must all be subject to. 2. Since he is forced to answer for himself, he is glad it is before king Agrippa, who, being himself a proselyte to the Jewish religion, understood all matters relating to it better than the other Roman governors did: *I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews.* It seems, Agrippa was a scholar, and had been particularly conversant in the Jewish learning, was expert in the customs of the Jewish religion, and knew the nature of them, and that they were not designed to be either universal or perpetual. He was expert also in the questions that arose upon those customs, in determining which the Jews themselves were not all of a mind. Agrippa was well versed in the scriptures of the Old-Testament, and therefore could make a better judgment upon the controversy between him and the Jews concerning Jesus being the Messiah than another could. It is an encouragement to a preacher to have those to speak to that are intelligent, and can discern things that differ. When Paul says, *Judge you what I say*, yet he *speaks as to wise men*, 1 Cor. x. 15. 3. He therefore begs that he would *hear him patiently*, μακροθυμῶς—with long suffering. Paul designs a long discourse, and begs that Agrippa will hear him out, and not be weary; he designs a plain discourse, and begs that he will hear him with mildness, and not be angry. Paul had some reason to fear that as Agrippa, being a Jew, was well versed in the Jewish customs, and therefore the more competent judge of his cause, so he was soured



in some measure with the Jewish leaven, and therefore prejudiced against Paul as the apostle of the Gentiles; he therefore says this to sweeten him: *I beseech thee, hear me patiently.* Surely the least we can expect, when we preach the faith of Christ, is to be heard patiently.

II. He professes that though he was hated and branded as an apostate, yet he still adhered to all that good which he was first educated and trained up in; his religion was always built upon the *promise of God made unto the fathers*; and this he still built upon.

1. See here what his religion was in his youth: *His manner of life was well known, v. 4, 5.* He was not indeed born among his own nation, but he was bred among them at Jerusalem. Though he had of late years been conversant with the Gentiles (which had given great offence to the Jews), yet at his setting out in the world he was intimately acquainted with the Jewish nation, and entirely in their interests. His education was neither foreign nor obscure; it was among his own nation at Jerusalem, where religion and learning flourished. All the Jews knew it, all that could remember so long, for Paul made himself remarkable betimes. Those that *knew him from the beginning* could testify for him that he was a Pharisee, that he was not only of the Jewish religion, and an observer of all the ordinances of it, but that he was of the *most strict sect of that religion*, most nice and exact in observing the institutions of it himself, and most rigid and critical in imposing them upon others. He was not only called a Pharisee, but he *lived a Pharisee*. All that knew him knew very well that never any Pharisee conformed more punctually to the rules of his order than he did. Nay, and he was of the better sort of Pharisees; for he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, who was an eminent rabbi of the school or house of Hillel, which was in much greater reputation for religion than the school or house of Samai. Now if Paul was a Pharisee, and lived a Pharisee, (1.) Then he was a scholar, a man of learning, and not an ignorant, illiterate, mechanic; the Pharisees knew the law, and were well versed in it, and in the traditional expositions of it. It was a reproach to the other apostles that they had not had an academical education, but were bred fishermen, *ch. iv. 13.* Therefore, that the unbelieving Jews might be left without excuse, here is an apostle raised up that had sat at the feet of their most eminent doctors. (2.) Then he was a moralist, a man of virtue, and not a rake or loose debauched young man. If he lived like a Pharisee, he was no drunkard nor fornicator; and, being a young Pharisee, we may hope he was no extortioner, nor had yet learned the arts which the crafty covetous old Pharisees had of devouring the houses of poor widows; but he was, *as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* He was not chargeable with any

instance of open vice and profaneness; and therefore, as he could not be thought to have deserted his religion because he did not know it (for he was a learned man), so he could not be thought to have deserted it because he did not love it, or was disaffected to the obligations of it, for he was a virtuous man, and not inclined to any immorality. (3.) Then he was orthodox, sound in the faith, and not a deist or sceptic, or a man of corrupt principles that led to infidelity. He was a Pharisee, in opposition to a Sadducee; he received those books of the Old Testament which the Sadducees rejected, believed a world of spirits, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the rewards and punishments of the future state, all which the Sadducees denied. They could not say, He quitted his religion for want of a principle, or for want of a due regard to divine revelation; no, he always had a veneration for the ancient *promise made of God unto the fathers*, and built his hope upon it.

Now though Paul knew very well that all this would not justify him before God, nor make a righteousness for him, yet he knew it was for his reputation among the Jews, and an argument *ad hominem*—such as Agrippa would feel, that he was not such a man as they represented him to be. Though he counted it but loss that he might win Christ, yet he mentioned it when it might serve to honour Christ. He knew very well that all this while he was a stranger to the spiritual nature of the divine law, and to heart-religion, and that except his righteousness exceeded this he should never go to heaven; yet he reflects upon it with some satisfaction that he had not been before his conversion an atheistical, profane, vicious man, but, according to the light he had, had *lived in all good conscience before God.*

2. See here what his religion is. He has not indeed such a zeal for the ceremonial law as he had in his youth. The sacrifices and offerings appointed by that, he thinks, are superseded by the great sacrifice which they typified; ceremonial pollutions and purifications from them he makes no conscience of, and thinks the Levitical priesthood is honourably swallowed up in the priesthood of Christ; but for the main principles of his religion he is as zealous for them as ever, and more so, and resolves to live and die by them.

(1.) His religion is built upon the *promise made of God unto the fathers*. It is built upon divine revelation, which he receives and believes, and ventures his soul upon; it is built upon divine grace, and that grace manifested and conveyed by promise. The promise of God is the guide and ground of his religion, the promise *made to the fathers*, which was more ancient than the ceremonial law, *that covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, and which the law, that was not till four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul*, Gal. iii. 17 Christ and heaven are the



two great doctrines of the gospel—that *God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. Now these two are the matter of the *promise made unto the fathers*. It may look back as far as the promise made to father Adam, concerning the seed of the woman, and those discoveries of a future state which the first patriarchs acted faith upon, and were saved by that faith; but it respects chiefly the promise made to father Abraham, that *in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed*, and that *God would be a God to him, and to his seed after him*: the former meaning Christ, the latter heaven; for, if God had not *prepared for them a city*, he would have been ashamed to have called himself *their God*. Heb. xi. 16.

(2.) His religion consists in the hopes of this promise. He places it not, as they did, in meats and drinks, and the observance of carnal ordinances (God had often shown what little account he made of them), but in a believing dependence upon God's grace in the covenant, and upon the promise, which was the great charter by which the church was first incorporated. [1.] He had hope in Christ as his promised seed; he hoped to be blessed in him, to receive the blessing of God and to be truly blessed. [2.] He had hopes of heaven; this is expressly meant, as appears by comparing ch. xxiv. 15, *That there shall be a resurrection of the dead*. Paul had no confidence in the flesh, but in Christ; no expectation at all of great things in this world, but of greater things in the other world than any this world can pretend to; he had his eye upon a future state.

(3.) Herein he concurred with all the pious Jews; his faith was not only according to the scripture, but according to the testimony of the church, which was a support to it. Though they set him up as a mark, he was not singular: "*Our twelve tribes*, the body of the Jewish church, *instantly serving God day and night*, hope to come to this promise, that is, to the good promised." The people of Israel are called *the twelve tribes*, because so they were at first; and, though we read not of the return of the ten tribes in a body, yet we have reason to think many particular persons, more or less of every tribe, returned to their own land; perhaps, by degrees, the greater part of those that were carried away. Christ speaks of *the twelve tribes*, Matt. xix. 28. Anna was of the tribe of Asher, Luke ii. 36. James directs his epistle to *the twelve tribes scattered abroad*, Jam. i. 1. "Our twelve tribes, which make up the body of our nation, to which I and others belong. Now all the Israelites profess to believe in this promise, both of Christ and heaven, and hope to come to the benefits of them. They all hope for a Messiah to come, and we that are Christians hope in a Messiah already come; so that we all agree to build upon the same promise. They look for the *resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come*, and this

is what I look for. Why should I be looked upon as advancing something dangerous and heterodox, or as an apostate from the faith and worship of the Jewish church, when I agree with them in this fundamental article? I hope to come to the same heaven at last that they hope to come to; and, if we expect to meet so happily in our end, why should we fall out so unhappily by the way?" Nay, the Jewish church not only hoped to come to this promise, but, in the hope of it, they *instantly served God day and night*. The temple-service, which consisted in a continual course of religious duties, morning and evening, day and night, from the beginning of the year to the end of it, and was kept up by the priests and Levites, and the *stationary men*, as they called them, who continually attended there to lay their hands upon the public sacrifices, as the representatives of all the twelve tribes, this service was kept up in the profession of faith in the promise of eternal life, and, in expectation of it, *Paul instantly serves God day and night* in the gospel of his Son; the twelve tribes by their representatives do so in the law of Moses, but he and they do it in hope of the same promise: "Therefore they ought not to look upon me as a deserter from their church, so long as I hold by the same promise that they hold by." Much more should Christians, who hope in the same Jesus, for the same heaven, though differing in the modes and ceremonies of worship, hope the best one of another, and live together in holy love. Or it may be meant of particular persons who continued in the communion of the Jewish church, and were very devout in their way, serving God with great intenseness, and a close application of mind, and constant in it, *night and day*, as Anna, who *departed not from the temple, but served God* (it is the same word here used) *in fastings and prayers night and day*, Luke ii. 37. "In this way they hope to come to the promise, and I hope they will." Note, Those only can upon good grounds hope for eternal life that are diligent and constant in the service of God; and the prospect of that eternal life should engage us to diligence and constancy in all religious exercises. We should go on with our work with heaven in our eye. And of those that *instantly serve God day and night*, though not in our way, we ought to judge charitably.

(4.) This was what he was now suffering for—for preaching that doctrine which they themselves, if they did but understand themselves aright, must own: *I am judged for the hope of the promise made unto the fathers*. He stuck to the promise, against the ceremonial law, while his persecutors stuck to the ceremonial law, against the promise: "It is for this hope's sake, king Agrippa, that I am accused of the Jews—because I do that which I think myself obliged to do by the hope of this promise." It is common for men to hate and persecute the power of that religion in others which yet they pride themselves in the



form of. Paul's hope was what *they themselves also allowed* (ch. xxiv. 15), and yet they were thus enraged against him for practising according to that hope. But it was his honour that when he suffered as a Christian he suffered *for the hope of Israel*, ch. xxviii. 20.

(5.) This was what he would persuade all that heard him cordially to embrace (v. 8). *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?* This seems to come in somewhat abruptly; but it is probable Paul said much more than is here recorded, and that he explained the *promise made to the fathers* to be the promise of the resurrection and eternal life, and proved that he was in the right way of pursuing his hope of that happiness because he believed in Christ who had *risen from the dead*, which was a pledge and earnest of that resurrection which the fathers hoped for. Paul is therefore earnest to *know the power of Christ's resurrection*, that by it he might *attain to the resurrection of the dead*; see Phil. iii. 10, 11. Now many of his hearers were Gentiles, most of them perhaps, Festus particularly, and we may suppose, when they heard him speak so much of Christ's resurrection, and of the resurrection from the dead, which the twelve tribes hoped for, that they mocked, as the Athenians did, began to smile at it, and whispered to one another what an absurd thing it was, which occasioned Paul thus to reason with them. *What! is it thought incredible with you that God should raise the dead?* So it may be read. *If it be marvellous in your eyes, should it be marvellous in mine eyes, saith the Lord of hosts?* Zech. viii. 6. If it be above the power of nature, yet it is not above the power of the God of nature. Note, There is no reason why we should think it at all incredible that God should raise the dead. We are not required to believe any thing that is incredible, any thing that implies a contradiction. There are motives of credibility sufficient to carry us through all the doctrines of the Christian religion, and this particularly of the resurrection of the dead. Has not God an infinite almighty power, to which nothing is impossible? Did not he make the world at first out of nothing, with a word's speaking? Did he not form our bodies, form them out of the clay, and breathe into us the breath of life at first? and cannot the same power form them again out of their own clay, and put life into them again? Do we not see a kind of resurrection in nature, at the return of every spring? Has the sun such a force to raise dead plants, and should it seem incredible to us that God should raise dead bodies?

III. He acknowledges that while he continued a Pharisee he was a bitter enemy to Christians and Christianity, and thought he ought to be so, and continued so to the moment that Christ wrought that wonderful change in him. This he mentions,

1. To show that his becoming a Christian

and a preacher was not the product and result of any previous disposition or inclination that way, or any gradual advance of thought in favour of the Christian doctrine; he did not reason himself into Christianity by a chain of arguments, but was brought into the highest degree of an assurance of it, immediately from the highest degree of prejudice against it, by which it appeared that he was made a Christian and a preacher by a supernatural power; so that his conversion in such a miraculous way was not only to himself, but to others also, a convincing proof of the truth of Christianity.

2. Perhaps he designs it for such an excuse of his prosecutors as Christ made for his, when he said, *They know not what they do*. Paul himself once thought he did what he ought to do when he persecuted the disciples of Christ, and he charitably thinks they laboured under the like mistake. Observe,

(1.) What a fool he was in his opinion (v. 9): *He thought with himself that he ought to do many things*, every thing that lay in his power, *contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*, contrary to his doctrine, his honour, his interest. That name did no harm, yet, because it agreed not with the notion he had of the kingdom of the Messiah, he was for doing all he could against it. He thought he did God good service in persecuting those who called on the name of Jesus Christ. Note, It is possible for those to be confident they are in the right who yet are evidently in the wrong; and for those to think they are doing their duty who are wilfully persisting in the greatest sin. Those that hated their brethren, and cast them out, said, *Let the Lord be glorified*, Isa. lxvi. 5. Under colour and pretext of religion, the most barbarous and inhuman villanies have been not only justified, but sanctified and magnified, John xvi. 2.

(2.) What a fury he was in his practice, v. 10, 11. There is not a more violent principle in the world than conscience misinformed. When Paul thought it his duty to do all he could against the name of Christ, he spared no pains nor cost in it. He gives an account of what he did of that kind, and aggravates it as one that was truly penitent for it. *I was a blasphemer, a persecutor*, 1 Tim. i. 13. [1.] He filled the jails with Christians, as if they had been the worst of criminals, designing hereby not only to terrify them, but to make them odious to the people. He was *the devil that cast some of them into prison* (Rev. ii. 10), took them into custody, in order to their being prosecuted. *Many of the saints did I shut up in prison* (ch. xxvi. 10), *both men and women*, ch. viii. 3. [2.] He made himself the tool of the chief priests. Herein from them he *received authority*, as an inferior officer, to put their laws in execution, and proud enough he was to be a man in authority for such a purpose. [3.] He

was very officious to vote, unasked for, the putting of Christians to death, particularly Stephen, to whose death Saul was consenting (*ch. viii. 1*), and so made himself *particeps criminis*—*partaker of the crime*. Perhaps he was, for his great zeal, though young, made a member of the sanhedrim, and there voted for the condemning of Christians to die; or, after they were condemned, he justified what was done, and commended it, and so made himself guilty *ex post facto*—*after the deed was committed*, as if he had been a judge or jury-man. [4.] He brought them under punishments of an inferior nature, in the *synagogues*, where they were *scurged* as transgressors of the rules of the synagogue. He had a hand in the punishing of many; nay, it should seem the same persons were by his means *often punished*, as he himself was five times, 2 Cor. xi. 24. [5.] He not only punished them for their religion, but, taking a pride in triumphing over men's consciences, he forced them to abjure their religion, by putting them to the torture: "*I compelled them to blaspheme Christ, and to say he was a deceiver and they were deceived in him—compelled them to deny their Master, and renounce their obligations to him.*" Nothing will lie heavier upon persecutors than forcing men's consciences, how much soever they may now triumph in the proselytes they have made by their violences. [6.] His rage swelled so against Christians and Christianity that Jerusalem itself was too narrow a stage for it to act upon, but, being *exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them even to strange cities*. He was mad at them, to see how much they had to say for themselves, notwithstanding all he did against them, mad to see them multiply the more for their being afflicted. He was *exceedingly mad*; the stream of his fury would admit no banks, no bounds, but he was as much a terror to himself as he was to them, so great was his vexation within himself that he could not prevail, as well as his indignation against them. Persecutors are mad men, and some of them *exceedingly mad*. Paul was mad to see that those in other cities were not so outrageous against the Christians, and therefore made himself busy where he had no business, and persecuted the Christians even in strange cities. There is not a more restless principle than malice, especially that which pretends conscience.

This was Paul's character, and thus his manner of life in the beginning of his time; and therefore he could not be presumed to be a Christian by education or custom, or to be drawn in by hope of preferment, for all imaginable external objections lay against his being a Christian.

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a

light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. 14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. 19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*. 22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23 That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first, that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and unto the Gentiles.

All who believe a God, and have a reverence for his sovereignty, must acknowledge that those who speak and act by his direction, and by warrant from him, are not to be opposed; for that *is fighting against God*. Now Paul here, by a plain and faithful narrative of matters of fact, makes it out to this august assembly that he had an immediate call from heaven to preach the gospel of Christ to the



Gentile world which was the thing that exasperated the Jews against him. He here shows,

I. That he was made a Christian by a divine power, notwithstanding all his prejudices against that way. He was brought into it on a sudden by the hand of heaven; not compelled to confess Christ by outward force, as he had compelled others to blaspheme him, but by a divine and spiritual energy, by a revelation of Christ from above, both to him and in him and this when he was in the full career of his sin, going to Damascus, to suppress Christianity by persecuting the Christians there, as hot as ever in the cause, his persecuting fury not in the least spent nor tired, nor was he tempted to give it up by the failing of his friends, for he had at this time as ample an *authority and commission from the chief priests* to persecute Christianity as ever he had, when he was obliged by a superior power to give up that, and accept another commission to preach up Christianity. Two things bring about this surprising change, a vision from heaven and a voice from heaven, which conveyed the knowledge of Christ to him by the two learning senses of seeing and hearing.

1. He saw a heavenly vision, the circumstances of which were such that it could not be a *delusion—deceptio visus*, but it was without doubt a divine appearance. (1.) *He saw a great light, a light from heaven*, such as could not be produced by any art, for it was not in the night, but *at mid day*; it was not in a house where tricks might have been played with him, but it was *in the way*, in the open air; it was such a light as was *above the brightness of the sun*, outshone and eclipsed that (Isa. xxiv. 23), and this could not be the product of Paul's own fancy, for it *shone round about those that journeyed with him*: they were all sensible of their being surrounded with this inundation of light, which made the sun itself to be in their eyes a less light. The force and power of this light appeared in the effects of it; they all fell to the earth upon the sight of it, such a mighty consternation did it put them into; this light was lightning for its force, yet did not pass away as lightning, but continued to shine round about them. In Old-Testament times God commonly manifested himself in the thick darkness, and made that his pavilion, 2 Chron. vi. 1. He spoke to Abraham in a great darkness (Gen. xv. 12), for that was a dispensation of darkness; but now that *life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel* Christ appeared in a great light. In the creation of grace, as of the world, the first thing created is light, 2 Cor. iv. 6. (2.) Christ himself appeared to him (v. 16): *I have appeared to thee for this purpose*. Christ was in this light, though those that travelled with Paul saw the light only, and not Christ in the light. It is not every knowledge that will serve to make us Christians, but it must be the *knowledge of Christ*.

2. He heard a heavenly voice, an articulate one, *speaking to him*; it is here said to be *in the Hebrew tongue* (which was not taken notice of before), his native language, the language of his religion, to intimate to him that though he must be sent among the Gentiles, yet he must not forget that he was a Hebrew, nor make himself a stranger to the Hebrew language. In what Christ said to him we may observe, (1.) That he called him by his name, and repeated it (*Saul, Saul*), which would surprise and startle him; and the more because he was now in a strange place, where he thought nobody knew him. (2.) That he convinced him of sin, of that great sin which he was now in the commission of, the sin of persecuting the Christians, and showed him the absurdity of it. (3.) That he interested himself in the sufferings of his followers: *Thou persecutest me* (v. 14), and again, *It is Jesus whom thou persecutest*, v. 15. Little did Paul think, when he was trampling upon those that he looked upon as the burdens and blemishes of this earth, that he was insulting one that was so much the glory of heaven. (4.) That he checked him for his wilful resistance of those convictions: *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*, or goads, *as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*. Paul's spirit at first perhaps began to rise, but he is told it is at his peril, and then he yields. Or, it was spoken by way of caution: "Take heed lest thou resist these convictions, for they are designed to affect thee, not to affront thee." (5.) That, upon his enquiry, Christ made himself known to him. Paul asked (v. 15), *"Who art thou, Lord?"* Let me know who it is that speaks to me from heaven, that I may answer him accordingly?" And he said, *"I am Jesus"*; he whom thou hast despised, and hated, and vilified; I bear that name which thou hast made so odious, and the naming of it criminal." Paul thought Jesus was buried in the earth, and, though stolen out of his own sepulchre, yet laid in some other. All the Jews were taught to say so, and therefore he is amazed to hear him speak from heaven, to see him surrounded with all this glory whom he had loaded with all possible ignominy. This convinced him that the doctrine of Jesus was divine and heavenly, and not only not to be opposed, but to be cordially embraced: *That Jesus is the Messiah*, for he has not only *risen from the dead*, but he has *received from God the Father honour and glory*; and this is enough to make him a Christian immediately, to quit the society of the persecutors, whom the Lord from heaven thus appears against, and to join himself with the society of the persecuted, whom the Lord from heaven thus appears for.

II. That he was made a minister by a divine authority: *That the same Jesus that appeared to him in that glorious light ordered him to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles*; he did not run without sending, nor was he sent by men like himself, but by him whom the Fa-



ther sent, John xx. 21. What is said of his being an apostle is here joined immediately to that which was said to him by the way, but it appears by *ch. ix. 15, and xxii. 15, 17, &c.*, that it was spoken to him afterwards; but he puts the two together for brevity-sake: *Rise, and stand upon thy feet.* Those whom Christ, by the light of his gospel, casts down in humiliation for sin, shall find that it is in order to their rising and standing upon their feet, in spiritual grace, strength, and comfort. If Christ has torn, it is that he may heal; if he has cast down, it is that he may raise up. *Rise then, and shake thyself from the dust* (Isa. lii. 2), help thyself, and Christ shall help thee. He must stand up, for Christ has work for him to do—has an errand, and a very great errand, to send him upon: *I have appeared to thee to make thee a minister.* Christ has the making of his own ministers; they have both their qualifications and their commissions from him. Paul thanks Christ Jesus who put him into the ministry, 1 Tim. i. 12. Christ appeared to him to make him a minister. One way or other, Christ will manifest himself to all those whom he makes his ministers; for how can those preach him who do not know him? And how can those know him to whom he does not by his spirit make himself known? Observe,

1. The office to which Paul is appointed: he is made a minister, to attend on Christ, and act for him, as a witness—to give evidence in his cause, and attest the truth of his doctrine. He must testify *the gospel of the grace of God*; Christ appeared to him that he might appear for Christ before men.

2. The matter of Paul's testimony: he must give an account to the world, (1.) *Of the things which he had seen*, now at this time, must tell people of Christ's manifesting himself to him by the way, and what he said to him. He saw these things that he might publish them, and he did take all occasions to publish them, as here, and before, *ch. 22.* (2.) *Of those things in which he would appear to him.* Christ now settled a correspondence with Paul, which he designed afterwards to keep up, and only told him now that he should hear further from him. Paul at first had but confused notions of the gospel, till Christ appeared to him and gave him fuller instructions. *The gospel he preached he received from Christ* immediately (Gal. i. 12); but he received it gradually, some at one time and some at another, as there was occasion. Christ often appeared to Paul, oftener, it is likely, than is recorded, and still taught him, *that he might still teach the people knowledge.*

3. The spiritual protection he was taken under, while he was thus employed as Christ's witness: all the powers of darkness could not prevail against him till he had finished his testimony (*v. 17*), *delivering thee from the people of the Jews and from the Gentiles.* Note, Christ's witnesses are under his special

care, and, though they may fall into the hands of the enemies, yet he will take care to deliver them out of their hands, and he knows how to do it. Christ had shown Paul at this time *what great things he must suffer* (*ch. ix. 16*), and yet tells him here he will *deliver him from the people.* Note, Great sufferings are reconcileable to the promise of the deliverance of God's people, for it is not promised that they shall be kept from trouble, but kept through it; and sometimes God delivers them into the hands of their persecutors that he may have the honour of delivering them out of their hands.

4. The special commission given him to go among the Gentiles, and the errand upon which he is sent to them; it was some years after Paul's conversion before he was *sent to the Gentiles*, or (for aught that appears) knew any thing of his being designed for that purpose (see *ch. xxii. 21*); but at length he is ordered to steer his course that way.

(1.) There is great work to be done among the Gentiles, and Paul must be instrumental in doing it. Two things must be done, which their case calls for the doing of:—[1.] A world that sits in darkness must be enlightened; those must be brought to *know the things that belong to their everlasting peace* who are yet ignorant of them, to know God as their end, and Christ as their way, who as yet know nothing of either. He is *sent to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light.* His preaching shall not only make known to them those things which they had not before heard of, but shall be the vehicle of that divine grace and power by which their understandings shall be enlightened to receive those things, and bid them welcome. Thus he shall open their eyes, which before were shut against the light, and they shall be willing to understand themselves, their own case and interest. Christ opens the heart by opening the eyes, does not lead men blindfold, but gives them to see their own way. He is sent not only to open their eyes for the present, but to keep them open, *to turn them from darkness to light*, that is, from following false and blind guides, their oracles, divinations, and superstitious usages, received by tradition from their fathers, and the corrupt notions and ideas they had of their gods, to follow a divine revelation of unquestionable certainty and truth. This was turning them from darkness to light, from the ways of darkness to those on which the light shines. The great design of the gospel is to instruct the ignorant, and to rectify the mistakes of those who are in error, that things may be set and seen in a true light.

[2.] A world that lies in wickedness, in the wicked one, must be sanctified and reformed; it is not enough for them to have their eyes opened, they must have their hearts renewed; not enough to be turned from darkness to light, but they must be turned from the power of Satan unto God, which will follow



of course; for Satan rules by the power of darkness, and God by the convincing evidence of light. Sinners are under the power of Satan; idolaters were so in a special manner, they paid their homage to devils. All sinners are under the influence of his temptations, yield themselves captives to him, are at his beck; converting grace turns them from under the dominion of Satan, and brings them into subjection to God, to conform to the rules of his word and comply with the dictates and directions of his Spirit, *translates them out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son*. When gracious dispositions are strong in the soul (as corrupt and sinful dispositions had been), it is then turned from the power of Satan unto God.

(2.) There is a great happiness designed for the Gentiles by this work—that *they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among those who are sanctified*; they are turned from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, from the slavery of Satan to the service of God; not that God may be a gainer by them, but that they may be gainers by him. [1.] That they may be restored to his favour, which by sin they have forfeited and thrown themselves out of: *That they may receive forgiveness of sins*. They are delivered from the dominion of sin, that they may be saved from that death which is the wages of sin. Not that they may merit forgiveness as a debt or reward, but that they may receive it as a free gift, that they may be qualified to receive the comfort of it. They are persuaded to lay down their arms, and return to their allegiance, that they may have the benefit of the act of indemnity, and may plead it in arrest of the judgment to be given against them. [2.] That they may be happy in the fruition of him; not only that they may have their sins pardoned, but *that they may have an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith that is in me*. Note, First, Heaven is an inheritance, it descends to all the children of God; for, *if children, then heirs*. *That they may have*, *κληρον*—a lot (so it might be read), alluding to the inheritances of Canaan, which were appointed by lot, and that also is the act of God, *the disposal thereof is of the Lord*. *That they may have a right*, so some read it; not by merit, but purely by grace. Secondly, All that are effectually turned from sin to God are not only pardoned, but preferred—have not only their attainder reversed, but a patent of honour given to them, and a grant of a rich inheritance. And the forgiveness of sins makes way for this inheritance, by taking that out of the way which alone hindered. Thirdly, All that shall be saved hereafter are sanctified now; those that have the heavenly inheritance must have it in this way, they must be prepared and made meet for it. None can be happy that are not holy; nor shall any be saints in heaven that are not first saints on earth. Fourthly, We need no more

to make us happy than to have our lot among those that are sanctified, to fare as they fare; this is having our lot among the chosen, for they are chosen to salvation through sanctification. Those who are sanctified shall be glorified. Let us therefore now cast in our lot among them, by coming into the communion of saints, and be willing to take our lot with them, and share with them in their afflictions, which (how grievous soever) our lot with them in the inheritance will abundantly make amends for. Fifthly, We are sanctified and saved by faith in Christ. Some refer it to the word next before, *sanctified by faith*, for faith purifies the heart, and applies to the soul those precious promises, and subjects the soul to the influence of that grace, by which we partake of a divine nature. Others refer it to the receiving of both pardon and the inheritance; it is by faith accepting the grant: it comes all to one; for it is by faith that we are justified, sanctified, and glorified. *By faith, τῇ εἰς ἐμὴ—that faith which is in me*; it is emphatically expressed. That faith which not only receives divine revelation in general, but which in a particular manner fastens upon Jesus Christ and his mediation, by which we rely upon Christ as *the Lord our righteousness*, and resign ourselves to him as the Lord our ruler. This is that by which we receive *the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life*.

III. That he had discharged his ministry, pursuant to his commission, by divine aid, and under divine direction and protection. God, who called him to be an apostle, owned him in his apostolical work, and carried him on in it with enlargement and success.

1. God gave him a heart to comply with the call (v. 19): *I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision*, for any one would say he ought to be obedient to it. Heavenly visions have a commanding power over earthly counsels, and it is at our peril if we be disobedient to them; yet if Paul had conferred with flesh and blood, and been swayed by his secular interest, he would have done as Jonah did, gone any where rather than upon this errand; but God *opened his ear, and he was not rebellious*. He accepted the commission, and, having with it received his instructions, he applied himself to act accordingly.

2. God enabled him to go through a great deal of work, though in it he grappled with a great deal of difficulty, v. 20. He applied himself to the preaching of the gospel with all vigour. (1.) He began at Damascus, where he was converted, for he resolved to lose no time, *ch. ix. 20*. (2.) When he came to Jerusalem, where he had his education, he there witnessed for Christ, where he had most furiously set himself against him, *ch. ix. 29*. (3.) He preached *throughout all the coasts of Judea*, in the country towns and villages, as Christ had done; he made the first offer of the gospel to the Jews, as Christ had appointed, and did not leave them till

they had wilfully thrust the gospel from them; and then, (4.) He turned to the Gentiles, and laid out himself for the good of their souls, labouring more abundantly than any of the apostles, nay perhaps than all put together.

3. His preaching was all practical. He did not go about to fill people's heads with airy notions, did not amuse them with nice speculations, nor set them together by the ears with matters of doubtful disputation, but he showed them, declared it, demonstrated it, that they ought, (1.) *To repent of their sins*, to be sorry for them and to confess them, and enter into covenant against them; they ought to *bethink themselves*, so the word *μετανοεῖν* properly signifies; they ought to change their mind and change their way, and undo what they had done amiss. (2.) *To turn to God*. They must not only conceive an antipathy to sin, but they must come into a conformity to God—must not only turn from that which is evil, but turn to that which is good; they must turn to God, in love and affection, and return to God in duty and obedience, and turn and return from the world and the flesh; this is that which is required from the whole revolted degenerate race of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles; *ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ τὸν Θεόν*—*to turn back to God, even to him*: to turn to him as our chief good and highest end, as our ruler and portion, turn our eye to him, turn our heart to him, and turn our feet unto his testimonies. (3.) *To do works meet for repentance*. This was what John preached, who was the first gospel preacher, Matt. iii. 8. Those that profess repentance must practise it, must live a life of repentance, must in every thing carry it as becomes penitents. It is not enough to speak penitent words, but we must do works agreeable to those words. As true faith, so true repentance, will work. Now what fault could be found with such preaching as this? Had it not a direct tendency to reform the world, and to redress its grievances, and to revive natural religion?

4. The Jews had no quarrel with him but upon this account, that he did all he could to persuade people to be religious, and to bring them to God by bringing them to Christ (v. 21): It was for these causes, and no other, *that the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me*; and let any one judge whether these were crimes worthy of death or of bonds. He suffered ill, not only for doing well himself, but for doing good to others. They attempted to kill him; it was his precious life that they hunted for, and hated, because it was a useful life; they caught him in the temple worshipping God, and there they set upon him, as if the better place the better deed.

5. He had no help but from heaven; supported and carried on by that, he went on in this great work (v. 22): "*Having therefore*

*obtained help of God, I continue unto this day*; ἔσθηκα—I have stood, my life has been preserved, and my work continued; I have stood my ground, and have not been beaten off; I have stood to what I said, and have not been afraid nor ashamed to persist in it." It was now above twenty years since Paul was converted, and all that time he had been very busy preaching the gospel in the midst of hazards; and what was it that bore him up? Not any strength of his own resolutions, but *having obtained help of God*; for therefore, because the work was so great and he had so much opposition, he could not otherwise have gone on in it, but by help obtained of God. Note, Those who are employed in work for God shall obtain help from God; for he will not be wanting in necessary assistances to his servants. And our continuance to this day must be attributed to help obtained of God; we had sunk, if he had not borne us up—had fallen off, if he had not carried us on; and it must be acknowledged with thankfulness to his praise. Paul mentions it as an evidence that he had his commission from God that from him he had ability to execute it. The preachers of the gospel could never have done, and suffered, and prospered, as they did, if they had not had immediate help from heaven, which they would not have had if it had not been the cause of God that they were now pleading.

6. He preached no doctrine but what agreed with the scriptures of the Old Testament: He *witnessed both to small and great*, to young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, obscure and illustrious, all being concerned in it. It was an evidence of the condescending grace of the gospel that it was witnessed to the meanest, and the poor were welcome to the knowledge of it; and of the incontestable truth and power of it that it was neither afraid nor ashamed to show itself to the greatest. The enemies of Paul objected against him that he preached something more than *that men should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance*. These indeed were but what the prophets of the Old Testament had preached; but, besides these, he had preached Christ, and his death, and his resurrection, and this was what they quarrelled with him for, as appears by ch. xxv. 19, *that he affirmed Jesus to be alive*: "And so I did," says Paul, "and so I do, but therein also I say no other than that which Moses and the prophets said shou'd come: and what greater honour can be done to them than to show that what they foretold is accomplished, and in the appointed season too—that what they said should come is come, and at the time they prefixed?" Three things they prophesied, and Paul preached:—(1.) *That Christ should suffer*, that the Messiah should be a sufferer—παθητός: not only a man, and capable of suffering, but that, as Messiah, he should be



appointed to sufferings; that his ignominious death should be not only consistent with, but pursuant of, his undertaking. The cross of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and Paul's preaching it was the great thing that exasperated them; but Paul stands to it that, in preaching that, he preached the fulfilling of the Old-Testament predictions, and therefore they ought not only not to be offended at what he preached, but to embrace it, and subscribe to it. (2.) *That he should be the first that should rise from the dead;* not the first in time, but the first in influence—that he should be the chief of the resurrection, the head, or principal one, *πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάντων*, in the same sense that he is called the *first-begotten from the dead* (Rev. i. 5), and the *first-born from the dead*, Col. i. 18. He opened the womb of the grave, as the first-born are said to do, and made way for our resurrection; and he is said to be the *first-fruits of those that slept* (1 Cor. xv. 20), for he sanctified the harvest. He was the first that rose from the dead to die no more; and, to show that the resurrection of all believers is in virtue of his, just when he arose *many dead bodies of saints arose, and went into the holy city*, Matt. xxvii. 52, 53. (3.) *That he should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles*, to the people of the Jews in the first place, for he was to be the *glory of his people Israel*. To them he showed light by himself, and then to the Gentiles by the ministry of his apostles, for he was to be a *light to enlighten those who sat in darkness*. In this Paul refers to his commission (v. 18), *To turn them from darkness to light*. He rose from the dead on purpose that he might show light to the people, that he might give a convincing proof of the truth of his doctrine, and might send it with so much the greater power, both among Jews and Gentiles. This also was foretold by the Old-Testament prophets, *that the Gentiles should be brought to the knowledge of God by the Messiah*; and what was there in all this that the Jews could justly be displeased at?

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. 26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to

be a Christian. 29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. 30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: 31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. 32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.

We have reason to think that Paul had a great deal more to say in defence of the gospel he preached, and for the honour of it, and to recommend it to the good opinion of this noble audience; he had just fallen upon that which was the life of the cause—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and here he is in his element; now he warms more than before, his mouth is opened towards them, his heart is enlarged. Lead him but to this subject, and let him have leave to go on, and he will never know when to conclude; for the power of Christ's death, and the fellowship of his sufferings, are with him inexhaustible subjects. It was a thousand pities then that he should be interrupted, as he is here, and that, being permitted to speak for himself (v. 1), he should not be permitted to say all he designed. But it was a hardship often put upon him, and is a disappointment to us too, who read his discourse with so much pleasure. But there is no remedy, the court thinks it is time to proceed to give in their judgment upon his case.

I. Festus, the Roman governor, is of opinion that the poor man is crazed, and that Bedlam is the fittest place for him. He is convinced that he is no criminal, no bad man, that should be punished, but he takes him to be a lunatic, a distracted man, that should be pitied, but at the same time should not be heeded, nor a word he says regarded; and thus he thinks he has found out an expedient to excuse himself both from condemning Paul as a prisoner and from believing him as a preacher; for, if he be not *compos mentis*—in his senses, he is not to be either condemned or credited. Now here observe,

1. What it was that Festus said of him (v. 24): *He said with a loud voice*, did not whisper it to those that sat next him; if so, it had been the more excusable, but (without consulting Agrippa, to whose judgment he had seemed to pay profound deference, ch. xxv. 26), *said aloud*, that he might oblige Paul to break off his discourse, and might divert the auditors from attending to it,

"Paul, thou art beside thyself, thou talkest like a madman, like one with a heated brain, that knowest not what thou sayest;" yet he does not suppose that a guilty conscience had disturbed his reason, nor that his sufferings, and the rage of his enemies against him, had given any shock to it; but he puts the most candid construction that could be upon his delirium: *Much learning hath made thee mad*, thou hast cracked thy brains with studying. This he speaks, not so much in anger, as in scorn and contempt. He did not understand what Paul said; it was above his capacity, it was all a riddle to him, and therefore he imputes it all to a heated imagination. *Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi*—If thou art not willing to be understood, thou oughtest to be neglected. (1.) He owns Paul to be a scholar, and a man of learning, because he could so readily refer to what Moses and the prophets wrote, books that he was a stranger to; and even this is turned to his reproach. The apostles, who were fishermen, were despised because they had no learning; Paul, who was a university-man, and bred a Pharisee, is despised as having too much learning, more than did him good. Thus the enemies of Christ's ministers will always have something or other to upbraid them with. (2.) He reproaches him as a madman. The prophets of the Old Testament were thus stigmatized, to prejudice people against them by putting them into an ill-name: *Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?* said the captains of the prophet, 2 Kings ix. 11; Hos. ix. 7. John Baptist and Christ were represented as having a devil, as being crazed. It is probable that Paul now spoke with more life and earnestness than he did in the beginning of his discourse, and used more gestures that were expressive of his zeal, and therefore Festus put this invidious character upon him, which perhaps never a one in the company but himself thought of. It is not so harmless a suggestion as some make it to say concerning those that are zealous in religion above others that they are crazed.

2. How Paul cleared himself from this invidious imputation, which whether he had ever lain under before is not certain; it should seem, it had been said of him by the false apostles, for he says (2 Cor. v. 13), *If we be beside ourselves*, as they say we are, *it is to God*; but he was never charged with this before the Roman governor, and therefore he must say something to this. (1.) He denies the charge, with due respect indeed to the governor, but with justice to himself, protesting that there was neither ground nor colour for it (v. 25): "*I am not mad, most noble Festus, nor ever was, nor anything like it; the use of my reason, thanks be to God, has been all my days continued to me, and at this time I do not ramble, but speak the words of truth and soberness, and know what I say.*" Observe, Though Festus gave Paul this base and contemptuous usage, not becoming a

gentlemen, much less a judge, yet Paul is so far from resenting it, and being provoked by it, that he gives him all possible respect, compliments him with his title of honour *most noble Festus*, to teach us not to render railing for railing, nor one invidious character for another, but to speak civilly to those who speak slightly of us. It becomes us, upon all occasions, to speak the words of truth and soberness, and then we may despise the unjust censures of men. (2.) He appeals to Agrippa concerning what he spoke (v. 26): *For the king knows of these things*, concerning Christ, and his death and resurrection, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, which had their accomplishment therein. He therefore spoke freely before him, who knew these were no fancies, but matters of fact, knew something of them, and therefore would be willing to know more: *For I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him*; no, not that which he had related concerning his own conversion, and the commission he had received to preach the gospel. Agrippa could not but have heard of it, having been so long conversant among the Jews. *This thing was not done in a corner*; all the country rang of it; and any of the Jews present might have witnessed for him that they had heard it many a time from others, and therefore it was unreasonable to censure him as a distracted man for relating it, much more for speaking of the death and resurrection of Christ, which was so universally spoken of. Peter tells Cornelius and his friends (ch. x. 37), *That word you know which was published throughout all Judea concerning Christ*; and therefore Agrippa could not be ignorant of it, and it was a shame for Festus that he was so.

II. Agrippa is so far from thinking him a madman that he thinks he never heard a man argue more strongly, nor talk more to the purpose.

1. Paul applies himself closely to Agrippa's conscience. Some think Festus was displeased at Paul because he kept his eye upon Agrippa, and directed his discourse to him all along, and that therefore he gave him that interruption, v. 24. But, if that was the thing that affronted him, Paul regards it not; he will speak to those who understand him, and whom he is likely to fasten something upon, and therefore still addresses Agrippa; and, because he had mentioned Moses and the prophets as confirming the gospel he preached, he refers Agrippa to them (v. 27): "*King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? Dost thou receive the scriptures of the Old Testament as a divine revelation, and admit them as foretelling good things to come?*" He does not stay for an answer, but, in compliment to Agrippa, takes it for granted: *I know that thou believest*; for every one knew that Agrippa professed the Jews' religion, as his fathers had done, and therefore both knew the writings of the prophets and gave



credit to them. Note, It is good dealing with those who have acquaintance with the scriptures and believe them; for such one has some hold of.

2. Agrippa owns there was a great deal of reason in what Paul said (v. 28): *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*. Some understand this as spoken ironically, and read it thus, *Wouldst thou in so little a time persuade me to be a Christian?* But, taking it so, it is an acknowledgment that Paul spoke very much to the purpose, and that, whatever others thought of it, to his mind there came a convincing power along with what he said: "Paul, thou art too hasty, thou canst not think to make a convert of me all of a sudden." Others take it as spoken seriously, and as a confession that he was in a manner, or within a little, convinced that Christ was the Messiah; for he could not but own, and had many a time thought so within himself, that the prophecies of the Old Testament had had their accomplishment in him; and now that it is urged thus solemnly upon him he is ready to yield to the conviction, he begins to sound a parley, and to think of rendering. He is as near being persuaded to believe in Christ as Felix, when he trembled, was to leave his sins: he sees a great deal of reason for Christianity; the proofs of it, he owns, are strong, and such as he cannot answer; the objections against it trifling, and such as he cannot for shame insist upon; so that if it were not for his obligations to the ceremonial law, and his respect to the religion of his fathers and of his country, or his regard to his dignity as a king and to his secular interests, he would turn Christian immediately. Note, Many are almost persuaded to be religious who are not quite persuaded; they are under strong convictions of their duty, and of the excellency of the ways of God, but yet are overruled by some external inducements, and do not pursue their convictions.

3. Paul, not being allowed time to pursue his argument, concludes with a compliment, or rather a pious wish that all his hearers were Christians, and this wish turned into a prayer: *ἐξέμην ἂν τῷ Θεῷ—I pray to God for it* (v. 29); it was his heart's desire and prayer to God for them all that they might be saved, Rom. x. 1. *That not only thou but all that hear me this day* (for he has the same kind design upon them all) *were both almost, and altogether, such as I am, except these bonds*. Hereby, (1.) He professes his resolution to cleave to his religion, as that which he was entirely satisfied in, and determined to live and die by. In wishing that they were all as he was, he does in effect declare against ever being as they were, whether Jews or Gentiles, how much soever it might be to his worldly advantage. He adheres to the instruction God gave to the prophet (Jer. xv. 19), *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them*. (2.) He intimates his satisfaction not only in

the truth, but in the benefit and advantage of Christianity; he had so much comfort in it for the present, and was so sure it would end in his eternal happiness, that he could not wish better to the best friend he had in the world than to wish him such a one as he was, a faithful zealous disciple of Jesus Christ. *Let my enemy be as the wicked*, says Job, ch. xxvii. 7. Let my friend be as the Christian, says Paul. (3.) He intimates his trouble and concern that Agrippa went no further than being almost such a one as he was, almost a Christian, and not altogether one; for he wishes that he and the rest of them might be not only almost (what good would that do?) but altogether such as he was, sincere thorough-paced Christians. (4.) He intimates that it was the concern, and would be the unspeakable happiness, of every one of them to become *true Christians*—that there is grace enough in Christ for all, be they ever so many—enough for each, be they ever so craving. (5.) He intimates the hearty good-will he bore to them all; he wishes them, [1.] As well as he wished his own soul, that they might be as happy in Christ as he was. [2.] Better than he now was as to his outward condition, for he expects these bonds; he wishes they might all be comforted Christians as he was, but not persecuted Christians as he was—that they might taste as much as he did of the advantages that attended religion, but not so much of its crosses. They had made light of his imprisonment, and were in no concern for him. Felix detained him in bonds to gratify the Jews. Now this would have tempted many a one to wish them all in his bonds, that they might know what it was to be confined as he was, and then they would know the better how to pity him; but he was so far from this that, when he wished them in bonds to Christ, he desired they might never be in bonds for Christ. Nothing could be said more tenderly nor with a better grace.

III. They all agree that Paul is an innocent man, and is wronged in his prosecution. 1. The court broke up with some precipitation (v. 30): *When he had spoken that obliging word* (v. 29), which moved them all, the king was afraid, if he were permitted to go on, he would say something yet more moving, which might work upon some of them to appear more in his favour than was convenient, and perhaps might prevail with them to turn Christians. The king himself found his own heart begin to yield, and durst not trust himself to hear more, but, like Felix, dismissed Paul for this time. They ought in justice to have asked the prisoner whether he had any more to say for himself; but they thought he had said enough, and therefore *the king rose up, and the governor and Bernice, and those that sat with them*, concluding the case was plain, and with this they contented themselves, when Paul had more to say which would have made it

plainer. 2. They all concurred in an opinion of Paul's innocency, v. 31. The court withdrew to consult of the matter, to know one another's minds upon it, and *they talked among themselves*, all to the same purport, *that this man does nothing worthy of death*—he is not a criminal that deserves to die; nay, he *does nothing worthy of bonds*—he is not a dangerous man, whom it is prudent to confine. After this, Nero made a law for the putting of those to death who professed the Christian religion, but as yet there was no law of that kind among the Romans, and therefore no transgression; and this judgment of theirs is a testimony against that wicked law which Nero made not long after this, that Paul, the most active zealous Christian that ever was, was adjudged, even by those that were no friends to his way, to have *done nothing worthy of death, or of bonds*. Thus was he made manifest in the consciences of those who yet would not receive his doctrine; and the clamours of the hot-headed Jews, who cried out, *Away with him, it is not fit he should live*, were shamed by the moderate counsels of this court. 3. Agrippa gave his judgment *that he might have been set at liberty, if he had not himself appealed to Cæsar* (v. 32), but by that appeal he had put a bar in his own door. Some think that by the Roman law this was true, that, when a prisoner had appealed to the supreme court, the inferior courts could no more discharge him than they could condemn him; and we suppose the law was so, if the prosecutors joined issue upon the appeal, and consented to it. But it does not appear that in Paul's case the prosecutors did so; he was forced to do it; to screen himself from their fury, when he saw the governor did not take the care he ought to have done for his protection. And therefore others think that Agrippa and Festus, being unwilling to disoblige the Jews by setting him at liberty, made this serve for an excuse of their continuing him in custody, when they themselves knew they might have justified the discharging of him. Agrippa, who was but almost persuaded to be a Christian, proves no better than if he had not been at all persuaded. And now I cannot tell, (1.) Whether Paul repented of his having appealed to Cæsar, and wished he had not done it, blaming himself for it as a rash thing, now he saw that was the only thing that hindered his discharge. He had reason perhaps to reflect upon it with regret, and to charge himself with imprudence and impatience in it, and some distrust of the divine protection. He had better have appealed to God than to Cæsar. It confirms what Solomon says (Eccl. vi. 12), *Who knows what is good for man in this life?* What we think is for our welfare often proves to be a trap; such short-sighted creatures are we, and so ill-advised in leaning, as we do, to our own understanding. Or, (2.) Whether, notwithstanding

this, he was satisfied in what he had done, and was easy in his reflections upon it. His appealing to Cæsar was lawful, and what became a Roman citizen, and would help to make his cause considerable; and forasmuch as when he did it it appeared to him, as the case then stood, to be for the best, though afterwards it appeared otherwise, he did not vex himself with any self-reproach in the matter, but believed there was a providence in it, and it would issue well at last. And besides, he was told in a vision that he must *bear witness to Christ at Rome, ch. xxiii.* 11. And it is all one to him whether he goes thither a prisoner or at his liberty; he knows *the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and says, Let it stand. The will of the Lord be done*.

## CHAP. XXVII.

This whole chapter is taken up with an account of Paul's voyage towards Rome, when he was sent thither a prisoner by Festus the governor, upon his appeal to Cæsar. 1. The beginning of the voyage was well enough, it was calm and prosperous, ver. 1.—8. 11. Paul gave them notice of a storm coming, but could not prevail with them to lie by, ver. 9—11. 111. As they pursued their voyage, they met with a great deal of tempestuous weather, which reduced them to such extremity that they counted upon nothing but being cast away, ver. 12—20. 1V. Paul assured them that though they would not be advised by him to prevent their coming into this danger, yet, by the good providence of God, they should be brought safely through it, and none of them should be lost, ver. 21—26. V. At length they were at midnight thrown upon an island, which proved to be Malta, and then they were in the utmost danger imaginable, but were assisted by Paul's counsel to keep the mariners in the ship, and encouraged by his comforts to eat their meat, and have a good heart on it, ver. 27—36. VI. Their narrow escape with their lives, when they came to shore, when the ship was wrecked, but all the persons wonderfully preserved, ver. 37—41.

AND when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. 2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. 3 And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself. 4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia. 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. 7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; 8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city



of Lasea. 9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished *them*, 10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. 11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

It does not appear how long it was after Paul's conference with Agrippa that he was sent away for Rome, pursuant to his appeal to Cæsar; but it is likely they took the first convenience they could hear of to do it; in the mean time Paul is in the midst of his friends at Cæsarea—they comforts to him, and he a blessing to them. But here we are told,

I. How Paul was shipped off for Italy: a long voyage, but there is no remedy. He has appealed to Cæsar, and to Cæsar he must go: *It was determined that we should sail into Italy*, for to Rome they must go by sea; it would have been a vast way about to go by land. Hence, when the Roman conquest of the Jewish nation is foretold, it is said (Num. xxiv. 24), *Ships shall come from Chittim*, that is, *Italy*, and shall afflict Eber, that is, the Hebrews. It was determined by the counsel of God, before it was determined by the counsel of Festus, that Paul should go to Rome; for, whatever man intended, God had work for him to do there. Now here we are told, 1. Whose custody he was committed to—to one named *Julius*, a centurion of *Augustus's band*, as *Cornelius* was of the Italian band, or legion, *ch. x. 1*. He had soldiers under him, who were a guard upon Paul, that he might not make his escape, and likewise to protect him, that he might have no mischief done him. 2. What bottom he embarked in: they went on board a ship of *Adramyttium* (*v. 2*), a sea-port of Africa, whence this ship brought African goods, and, as it should seem, made a coasting voyage for Syria, where those goods came to a good market. 3. What company he had in this voyage, there were some prisoners who were committed to the custody of the same centurion, and who probably had appealed to Cæsar too, or were upon some other account removed to Rome, to be tried there, or to be examined as witnesses against some prisoners there; perhaps some notorious offenders, like *Barabbas*, who were therefore ordered to be brought before the emperor himself. Paul was linked with these, as Christ with the thieves that were crucified with him, and was obliged to take his lot with them in this voyage; and we find in this chapter (*v. 42*) that for their sakes he had like to have been

killed, but for his sake they were preserved. Note, It is no new thing for the innocent to be numbered among the transgressors. But he had also some of his friends with him, *Luke* particularly, the penman of this book, for he puts himself in all along, *We sailed into Italy*, and, *We launched*, *v. 2*. *Aristarchus* a Thessalonian is particularly named, as being now in his company. *Dr. Lightfoot* thinks that *Trophimus* the Ephesian went off with him, but that he left him sick at *Miletum* (*2 Tim. iv. 20*), when he passed by those coasts of Asia mentioned here (*v. 2*), and that there likewise he left *Timothy*. It was a comfort to Paul to have the society of some of his friends in this tedious voyage, with whom he might converse freely, though he had so much loose profane company about him. Those that go long voyages at sea are commonly necessitated to sojourn, as it were, in *Mesech* and *Kedar*, and have need of wisdom, that they may do good to the bad company they are in, may make them better, or at least be made never the worse by them.

II. What course they steered, and what places they touched at, which are particularly recorded for the confirming of the truth of the history to those who lived at that time, and could by their own knowledge tell of their being at such and such a place. 1. They touched at *Sidon*, not far off from where they went on board; thither they came *the next day*. And that which is observable here is, that *Julius the centurion* was extraordinarily civil to Paul. It is probable that he knew his case, and was one of the *chief captains*, or *principal men*, that heard him plead his own cause before *Agrippa* (*ch. xxv. 23*), and was convinced of his innocency, and the injury done him; and therefore, though Paul was committed to him as a prisoner, he treated him as a friend, as a scholar, as a gentleman, and as a man that had an interest in heaven: He *gave him liberty*, while the business of the ship detained it at *Sidon*, to *go among his friends* there, to *refresh himself*; and it would be a great refreshment to him. *Julius* herein gives an example to those in power to be respectful to those whom they find worthy of their respect, and in using their power to make a difference. A *Joseph*, a *Paul*, are not to be used as common prisoners. God herein encourages those that suffer for him to trust in him; for he can put it into the hearts of those to befriend them from whom they least expect it—can cause them to be pitied, nay, can cause them to be prized and valued, even in the eyes of those that carry them captive, *Ps. cvi. 46*. And it is likewise an instance of Paul's fidelity. He did not go about to make his escape, which he might have easily done; but, being out upon his parole of honour, he faithfully returns to his imprisonment. If the centurion is so civil as to take his word, ne is so just and honest as to keep his word. 2. They thence sailed under *Cyprus*, *v. 4*. If



the wind had been fair, they had gone forward by direct sailing, and had left Cyprus on the right hand; but, the wind not favouring them, they were driven to oblique sailing with a side wind, and so compassed the island, in a manner, and left it on the left hand. Sailors must do as they can, when they cannot do as they would, and make the best of their wind, whatever point it is in; so must we all in our passage over the ocean of this world. When the winds are contrary yet we must be getting forward as well as we can. 3. At a port called Myra they changed their ship; that which they were in, it is probable, having business no further, they went on board a vessel of Alexandria bound for Italy, v. 5, 6. Alexandria was now the chief city of Egypt, and great trading there was between that city and Italy; from Alexandria they carried corn to Rome, and the East-India goods and Persian which they imported at the Red Sea they exported again to all parts of the Mediterranean, and especially to Italy. And it was a particular favour shown to the Alexandrian ships in the ports of Italy that they were not obliged to strike sail, as other ships were, when they came into port. 4. With much ado they made *The Fair Havens*, a port of the island of Crete, v. 7, 8. They sailed slowly many days, being becalmed, or having the wind against them. It was a great while before they made the point of Cnidus, a port of Caria, and were forced to sail under Crete, as before under Cyprus; much difficulty they met with in passing by Salmone, a promontory on the eastern shore of the island of Crete. Though the voyage hitherto was not tempestuous, yet it was very tedious. Thus many that are not driven backward in their affairs by cross providences, yet sail slowly, and do not get forward by favourable providences. And many good Christians make this complaint in the concerns of their souls, that they do not rid ground in their way to heaven, but have much ado to keep their ground; they move with many stops and pauses, and lie a great while wind-bound. Observe, The place they came to was called *The Fair Havens*. Travellers say that it is known to this day by the same name, and that it answers the name from the pleasantness of its situation and prospect. And yet, (1.) It was not the harbour they were bound for; it was a fair haven, but it was not their haven. Whatever agreeable circumstances we may be in in this world, we must remember we are not at home, and therefore we must arise and depart; for, though it be a fair haven, it is not the desired haven, Ps. cvii. 30. (2.) It was not a commodious haven to winter in, so it is said, v. 12. It had a fine prospect, but it lay exposed to the weather. Note, Every fair haven is not a safe haven; nay, there may be most danger where there is most pleasure. III. What advice Paul gave them with reference to that part of their voyage they had

before them—it was to be content to winter where they were, and not to think of stirring till a better season of the year. 1. It was now a bad time for sailing; they had lost a deal of time while they were struggling with contrary winds. Sailing was now dangerous, because *the fast was already past*, that is, the famous yearly fast of the Jews, the day of atonement, which was on the tenth day of the seventh month, *a day to afflict the soul* with fasting; it was about the 20th of our September. That yearly fast was very religiously observed; but (which is strange) we never have any mention made in all the scripture history of the observance of it, unless it be meant here, where it serves only to describe the season of the year. Michaelmas is reckoned by mariners as had a time of the year to be at sea in as any other; they complain of their Michaelmas-blasts; it was that time now with these distressed voyagers. *The harvest was past, the summer was ended*; they had not only lost time, but lost the opportunity. 2. Paul put them in mind of it, and gave them notice of their danger (v. 10): “*I perceive*” (either by notice from God, or by observing their wilful resolution to prosecute the voyage notwithstanding the peril of the season) “*that this voyage will be with hurt and damage*; you that have effects on board are likely to lose them, and it will be a miracle of mercy if our lives be given us for a prey.” There were some good men in the ship, and many more bad men: but in things of this nature *all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked*. If both be in the same ship, they both are in the same danger. 3. They would not be advised by Paul in this matter, v. 11. They thought him impertinent in interposing in an affair of this nature, who did not understand navigation; and the centurion to whom it was referred to determine it, though himself a passenger, yet, being a man in authority, takes upon him to overrule, though he had not been oftener at sea perhaps than Paul, nor was better acquainted with these seas, for Paul had planted the gospel in Crete (Tit. i. 5), and knew the several parts of the island well enough. But the centurion gave more regard to the opinion of the master and owner of the ship than to Paul's; for every man is to be credited in his own profession ordinarily: but such a man as Paul, who was so intimate with Heaven, was rather to be regarded in seafaring matters than the most celebrated sailors. Note, Those know not what dangers they run themselves into who will be governed more by human prudence than by divine revelation. The centurion was very civil to Paul (v. 3), and yet would not be governed by his advice. Note, Many will show respect to good ministers that will not take their advice, Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

12 And because the haven was not



commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is a haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west. 13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by Crete. 14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. 15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive. 16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: 17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. 18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; 19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. 20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on *us*, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

In these verses we have,

I. The ship putting to sea again, and pursuing her voyage at first with a promising gale. Observe, 1. What induced them to leave the fair havens: it was because they thought the harbour not *commodious to winter in*; it was pleasant enough in summer, but in the winter they lay bleak. Or perhaps it was upon some other account in commodious; provisions perhaps were scarce and dear there; and they ran upon a mischief to avoid an inconvenience, as we often do. Some of the ship's crew, or of the council that was called to advise in this matter, were for staying there, rather than venturing to sea now that the weather was so uncertain: it is better to be safe in an incommodious harbour than to be lost in a tempestuous sea. But they were outvoted when it was put to the question, and the *greater part advised to depart thence also*; yet they aimed not to go far, but only to another port of the same island, here called Phenice, and some think it was so called because the Phenicians frequented it much, the merchants of Tyre and Sidon. It is here described to lie towards the south-west and north-west. Probably the haven was between two promontories or juttings-out of

land into the sea, one of which pointed to the north-west and the other to the south-west, by which it was guarded against the east winds. Thus hath the wisdom of the Creator provided for the relief and safety of those who *go down to the sea in ships, and do business in great waters*. In vain had nature provided for us the waters to sail on, if it had not likewise provided for us natural harbours to take shelter in. 2. What encouragement they had at first to pursue their voyage. They set out with a fair wind (*v. 13*), the *south wind blew softly*, upon which they flattered themselves with hope that they should gain their point, and so they sailed close by the coast of Crete and were not afraid of running upon the rocks or quicksands, because the wind blew so gently. Those who put to sea with ever so fair a gale know not what storms they may yet meet with, and therefore must not be secure, nor take it for granted that they have obtained their purpose, when so many accidents may happen to cross their purpose. *Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as though he had put it off*.

II. The ship in a storm presently, a dreadful storm. They looked at second causes, and took their measures from the favourable hints they gave, and imagined that because the south wind now blew softly it would always blow so; in confidence of this, they ventured to sea, but were soon made sensible of their folly in giving more credit to a smiling wind than to the word of God in Paul's mouth, by which they had fair warning given them of a storm. Observe,

1. What their danger and distress was, (1.) *There arose against them a tempestuous wind* which was not only contrary to them, and directly in their teeth, so that they could not get forward, but a violent wind, which raised the waves, like that which was sent forth in pursuit of Jonah, though Paul was following God, and going on in his duty, and not as Jonah running away from God and his duty. This wind the sailors called *Euroclydon*, a north-east wind, which upon those seas perhaps was observed to be in a particular manner troublesome and dangerous. It was a sort of whirlwind, for the ship is said to be caught by it, *v. 15*. It was God that commanded this wind to rise, designing to bring glory to himself, and reputation to Paul, out of it; stormy winds being brought out of his treasures (Ps. cxxxv. 7), they fulfil his word, Ps. cxlviii. 8. (2.) The ship was *exceedingly tossed* (*v. 18*); it was kicked like a football from wave to wave; its passengers (as it is elegantly described, Ps. cvii. 26, 27) *mount up to the heavens, go down again to the depths, reel to and fro, stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end*. The ship could not possibly bear up into the wind, could not make her way in opposition to the wind; and therefore they folded up their sails, which in such a storm would endanger them rather than do them any service, and so

let the ship drive, Not whither it would, but whither it was impelled by the impetuous waves—*Non quo voluit, sed quo rapit impetus undæ.* Ovid. Trist. It is probable that they were very near the Haven of Phenice when this tempest arose, and thought they should presently be in a quiet haven, and were pleasing themselves with the thought of it, and wintering there, and lo, of a sudden, they are in this distress. Let us therefore always rejoice with trembling, and never expect a perfect security, nor a perpetual security, till we come to heaven. (3.) They saw neither sun nor stars for many days. This made the tempest the more terrible, that they were all in the dark; and the use of the loadstone for the direction of sailors not being then found out (so that they had no guide at all, when they could see neither sun nor stars) made the case the more hazardous. Thus melancholy sometimes is the condition of the people of God upon a spiritual account. *They walk in darkness and have no light.* Neither sun nor stars appear; they cannot dwell, nay, they cannot fasten, upon any thing comfortable or encouraging; thus it may be with them, and yet light is sown for them. (4.) They had abundance of winter-weather: *No small tempest—χειμών οὐκ ὀλίγος*, cold rain, and snow, and all the rigours of that season of the year, so that they were ready to perish for cold; and all this continued many days. See what hardships those often undergo who are much at sea, besides the hazards of life they run; and yet to get gain there are still those who make nothing of all this; and it is an instance of divine Providence that it disposes some to this employment, notwithstanding the difficulties that attend it, for the keeping up of commerce among the nations, and the isles of the Gentiles particularly; and Zebulun can as heartily rejoice in his going out as Issachar in his tents. Perhaps Christ therefore chose ministers from among seafaring men, because they had been used to endure hardness.

2. What means they used for their own relief: they betook themselves to all the poor shifts (for I can call them no better) that sailors in distress have recourse to. (1.) When they could not make head against the wind, they let the ship run adrift, finding it was to no purpose to ply either the oar or the sail. When it is fruitless to struggle, it is wisdom to yield. (2.) They nevertheless did what they could to avoid the present danger; there was a little island called Claudia, and when they were near that, though they could not pursue their voyage, they took care to prevent their shipwreck, and therefore so ordered their matters that they did not run against the island, but quietly ran under it, v. 16. (3.) When they were afraid they should scarcely save the ship, they were busy to save the boat, which they did with much ado. They had much work to come by the boat (v. 16), but at last they took it up, v. 17. This might

be of use in any exigence, and therefore they made hard shift to get it into the ship to them. (4.) They used means which were proper enough in those times, when the art of navigation was far short of the perfection it is now come to; they *undergirded the ship*, v. 17. They bound the ship under the bottom of it with strong cables, to keep it from bulging in the extremity of the tempest. (5.) For fear of falling into the quicksands they struck sail, and then let the ship go as it would. It is strange how a ship will live at sea (so they express it), even in very stormy weather, if it have but sea-room; and, when the sailors cannot make the shore, it is their interest to keep as far off it as they can. (6.) The next day they lightened the ship of its cargo, threw the goods and merchandises overboard (as Jonah's mariners did, ch. i. 5), being willing rather to be poor without them than to perish with them. *Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life.* See what the wealth of this world is; how much soever it is courted as a blessing, the time may come when it will be a burden, not only too heavy to be carried safe of itself, but heavy enough to sink him that has it. Riches are often kept by the owners thereof to their hurt (Eccl. v. 13), and parted with to their good. But see the folly of the children of this world, they can be thus prodigal of their goods when it is for the saving of their lives, and yet how sparing of them in works of piety and charity, and in suffering for Christ, though they are told by eternal Truth itself that those shall be recompensed more than a thousand fold in the resurrection of the just. Those went upon a principle of faith who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance, Heb. x. 34. Any man will rather make shipwreck of his goods than of his life; but many will rather make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience than of their goods. (7.) The third day they cast out the tacklings of the ship—the utensils of it, *Armamenta* (so some render it), as if it were a ship of force. With us it is common to heave the guns over-board in the extremity of a storm; but what heavy artillery they had then which it was necessary to lighten the ship of I do not know; and I question whether it was not then a vulgar error among seamen thus to throw every thing into the sea, even that which would be of great use in a storm, and no great weight.

3. The despair which at last they were brought to (v. 20): *All hope that we should be saved was then taken away.* The storm continued, and they saw no symptoms of its abatement; we have known very blustering weather to continue for some weeks. The means they had used were ineffectual, so that they were at their wits' end; and such was the consternation that this melancholy prospect put them into that they had no heart either to eat or drink. They had provision



enough on board (v. 38), but such bondage were they under, through fear of death, that they could not admit the supports of life. Why did not Paul, by the power of Christ, and in his name, lay this storm? Why did he not say to the winds and waves, *Peace, be still*, as his Master had done? Surely it was because the apostles wrought miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, not for the serving of a turn for themselves or their friends.

21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. 22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, 24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. 26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. 27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; 28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms. 29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. 30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, 31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. 32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. 33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken

nothing. 34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you. 35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat. 36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat. 37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. 39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. 40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. 41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. 42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. 43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land: 44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

We have here the issue of the distress of Paul and his fellow-travellers; they escaped with their lives and that was all, and that was for Paul's sake. We are here told (v. 37) what number there were on board—mariners, merchants, soldiers, prisoners, and other passengers, in all two hundred and seventy-six souls; this is taken notice of to make us the more concerned for them in reading the story, that they were such a considerable number, whose lives were now in the utmost jeopardy, and one Paul among them worth more than all the rest. We left them in despair, giving up themselves for gone. Whether they *called every man on his God*, as Jonah's mariners



did, we are not told; it is well if this laudable practice in a storm was not gone out of fashion and made a jest of. However, Paul among these seamen was not, like Jonah among his, the cause of the storm, but the comforter in the storm, and as much a credit to the profession of an apostle as Jonah was a blemish to the character of a prophet. Now here we have,

1. The encouragement Paul gave them, by assuring them, in the name of God, that their lives should all be saved, even when, in human appearance, all hope that they should be saved was taken away. Paul rescued them from their despair first, that they might not die of that, and starve themselves in that, and then they were in a fair way to be rescued from their distress. *After long abstinence*, as if they were resolved not to eat till they knew whether they should live or die, *Paul stood forth in the midst of them*. During the distress hitherto Paul hid himself among them, was one of the crowd, helped with the rest to *throw out the tackling* (v. 19), but now he distinguished himself, and, though a prisoner, undertook to be their counsellor and comforter.

1. He reproves them for not taking his advice, which was to stay where they were, in the road of Lasea (v. 8): "*You should have hearkened to me and not have loosed from Crete*, where we might have made a shift to winter well enough, and then we should not have *gained this harm and loss*, that is, we should have escaped them. Harm and loss in the world, if sanctified to us, may be truly said to be gain; for if they wear us from present things, and awaken us to think of a future state, we are truly gainers by them. Observe, They did not hearken to Paul when he warned them of their danger, and yet if they will but acknowledge their folly, and repent of it, he will speak comfort and relief to them now that they are in danger, so compassionate is God to those that are in misery, though they bring themselves into it by their own incogitancy, nay, by their own wilfulness, and contempt of admonition. Paul, before administering comfort, will first make them sensible of their sin in not hearkening to him, by upbraiding them with their rashness, and probably, when he tells them of their gaining harm and loss, he reflects upon what they promised themselves by proceeding on their voyage, that they should gain so much time, gain this and the other point: "But," says he, "you have gained nothing but harm and loss; how will you answer it?" That which they are blamed for is their loosing from Crete, where they were safe. Note, Most people bring themselves into inconvenience, because they do not know when they are well off, but gain harm and loss by aiming against advice to better themselves.

2. He assures them that though they should lose the ship yet they should none of them lose their lives: "You see your folly in not

being ruled by me:" he does not say, "Now therefore expect to fare accordingly, you may thank yourselves if you be all lost, those that will not be counselled cannot be helped." No, "Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing; your case is sad, but it is not desperate, now, *I exhort you to be of good cheer*." Thus we say to sinners that are convinced of their sin and folly, and begin to see and bewail their error, "*You should have hearkened unto us*, and should have had nothing to do with sin; yet now we *exhort you to be of good cheer*: though you would not take our advice when we said, *Do not presume*, yet take it now when we say, *Do not despair*." They had given up the cause, and would use no further means, because *all hope that they should be saved was taken away*. Now Paul quickens them to bestir themselves yet in working for their own safety, by telling them that if they would resume their vigour they should secure their lives. He gives them this assurance when they were brought to the last extremity, for now it would be doubly welcome to them to be told that not a life should be lost when they were ready to conclude they must inevitably be all lost. He tells them, (1.) That they must count upon the loss of the ship. Those who were interested in that and the goods were probably those greater part that were for pushing forward the voyage and running the venture, notwithstanding Paul's admonition, and they are made to pay for their rashness. Their ship shall be wrecked. Many a stately, strong, rich, gallant ship is lost in the mighty waters in a little time; *for vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit*. But, (2.) *Not a life shall be lost*. This would be good news to those that were ready to die for fear of dying, and whose guilty consciences made death look very terrible to them.

3. He tells them what ground he had for this assurance, that it is not a banter upon them, to put them into humour, nor a human conjecture, he has a divine revelation for it, and is as confident of it as that God is true, being fully satisfied that he has his word for it. An angel of God appeared to him in the night, and told him that for his sake they should all be preserved (v. 23—25), which would double the mercy of their preservation, that they should have it not only by providence, but by promise, and as a particular favour to Paul. Now observe here,

(1.) The solemn profession Paul makes of relation to God, the God from whom he had this favourable intelligence: *It is he whose I am, and whom I serve*. He looks upon God, [1.] As his rightful owner, who has a sovereign incontestable title to him, and dominion over him: *Whose I am*. Because God made us and not we ourselves, therefore we are not our own but his. His we are by creation, for he made us; by preservation, for he maintains us; by redemption, for he bought us. We are more his than our own



[2.] As his sovereign ruler and master, who, having given him being, has right to give him law: *Whom I serve*. Because his weare, therefore we are bound to serve him, to devote ourselves to his honour and employ ourselves in his work. It is Christ that Paul here has an eye to; he is God, and the angels are his, and go on his errands. Paul often calls himself a *servant of Jesus Christ*; he is his, and him he serves, both as a Christian and as an apostle; he does not say, "Whose we are, and whom we serve," for most that were present were strangers to him, but, "Whose *I am*, and whom *I serve*, whatever others do; nay, whom *I am* now in the actual service of, going to Rome, not as you are, upon worldly business, but to appear as a witness for Christ." Now this he tells the company, that, seeing their relief coming from his God whose he was and whom he served, they might thereby be drawn in to take him for their God, and to serve him likewise; for the same reason Jonah said to his mariners, *I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land*, Jonah i. 9.

(2.) The account he gives of the vision he had: *There stood by me this night an angel of God*, a divine messenger who used formerly to bring him messages from heaven; he *stood by him*, visibly appeared to him, probably when he was awake upon his bed. Though he was *afar off upon the sea* (Ps. lxxv. 5), *on the uttermost parts of the sea* (Ps. cxxxix. 9), yet this could not intercept his communion with God, nor deprive him of the benefit of divine visits. Thence he can direct a prayer to God, and thither God can direct an angel to him. He knows not where he is himself, yet God's angel knows where to find him out. The *ship is tossed* with winds and waves, hurried to and fro with the utmost violence, and yet the angel finds a way into it. No storms nor tempests can hinder the communications of God's favour to his people, for he is a very present help, a help at hand, even when the *sea roars and is troubled*, Ps. xlv. 1, 3. We may suppose that Paul, being a prisoner, had not a cabin of his own in the ship, much less a bed in the captain's cabin, but was put down into the hold (any dark or dirty place was thought good enough for him in common with the rest of the prisoners), and yet there the angel of God stood by him. Meanness and poverty set none at a distance from God and his favour. Jacob, when he has no pillow but a stone, no curtains but the clouds, yet has a vision of angels. Paul had this vision but *this last night*. He had himself been assured by a former vision that he should go to Rome (*ch. xxiii. 11*), from which he might infer that he himself should be safe; but he has this fresh vision to assure him of the safety of those with him.

(3.) The encouragements that were given him in the vision, v. 14. [1.] He is forbidden to fear. Though all about him are at

their wits' end, and lost in despair, yet, *Fear not, Paul*; fear not their fear, nor be afraid, Isa. viii. 12. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, but let not the saints be afraid, no, not at sea, in a storm; for the *Lord of hosts is with them*, and their *place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks*, Isa. xxxiii. 14—16. [2.] He is assured that for his part he shall come safely to Rome: *Thou must be brought before Cæsar*. As the rage of the most potent enemies, so the rage of the most stormy sea, cannot prevail against God's witnesses till they have finished their testimony. Paul must be preserved in this danger, for he is reserved for further service. This is comfortable for the faithful servants of God in straits and difficulties, that as long as God has any work for them to do their lives shall be prolonged. [3.] That for his sake all that were in the ship with him should be delivered too from perishing in this storm: *God hath given thee all those that sail with thee*. The angel that was ordered to bring him this message could have singled him out from this wretched crew, and those that were his friends too, and have carried them safely to shore, and have left the rest to perish, because they would not take Paul's counsel. But God chooses rather, by preserving them all for his sake, to show what great blessings good men are to the world, than by delivering him only to show how good men are distinguished from the world. *God has given thee all those that sail with thee*, that is, spares them in answer to thy prayers, or for thy sake. Sometimes good men deliver *neither sons nor daughters, but their own souls only*, Ezek. xiv. 18. But Paul here delivers a whole ship's crew, almost three hundred souls. Note, God often spares wicked people for the sake of the godly; as Zoar for Lot's sake, and as Sodom might have been, if there had been ten righteous persons in it. The good people are hated and persecuted in the world as if they were not worthy to live in it, yet really it is for their sakes that the world stands. If Paul had thrust himself needlessly into bad company, he might justly have been cast away with them, but, God calling him into it, they are preserved with him. And it is intimated that it was a great favour to Paul, and he looked upon it to be so, that others were saved for his sake: *They are given thee*. There is no greater satisfaction to a good man than to know that he is a public blessing.

4. He comforts them with the same comforts wherewith he himself was comforted (v. 25): "*Wherefore, Sirs, be of good cheer, you shall see even this will end well; for I believe God, and depend upon his word, that it shall be even as it was told me.*" He would not require them to give credit to that to which he did not himself give credit; and therefore solemnly professes that he believes it himself, and the belief of it makes him easy: "I doubt not but it shall be as it was

told me." Thus he staggers not at the promise of God through unbelief. Hath God spoken, and shall he not make it good? No doubt he can, no doubt he will; for he is not a man that he should lie. And shall it be as God hath said? Then be of good cheer, be of good courage. God is ever faithful, and therefore let all that have an interest in his promise be ever cheerful. If with God saying and doing are not two things, then with us believing and enjoying should not.

5. He gives them a sign, telling them particularly what this tempestuous voyage would issue in (v. 26): "*We must be cast upon a certain island, and that will both break the ship and save the passengers; and so the prediction in both respects will be fulfilled.*" The pilot had quitted his post, the ship was left to run at random, they knew not what latitude they were in, much less how to steer their course, and yet Providence undertakes to bring them to an island that shall be a refuge for them. When the church of God, like this ship, is tossed with tempests, and not comforted, when there is none to guide her of all her sons, yet God can bring her safely to shore, and will do it.

II. Their coming at length to an anchor upon an unknown shore, v. 27—29. 1. They had been a full fortnight in the storm, continually expecting death: *The fourteenth night, and not sooner, they came near land; they were that night driven up and down in Adria*, not in the Adriatic Gulf on which Venice stands, but in the Adriatic Sea, a part of the Mediterranean, containing both the Sicilian and Ionian seas, and extending to the African shore; in this sea they were tossed, and knew not whereabouts they were. 2. *About midnight the mariners apprehended that they drew near to some shore*, which confirmed what Paul had told them, that they must be driven upon some island. To try whether it was so or no, *they sounded*, in order to their finding the depth of the water, for the water would be shallower as they drew nearer to shore; by the first experiment *they found they drew twenty fathoms deep of water*, and by the next *fifteen fathoms*, which was a demonstration that they were near some shore; God has wisely ordered such a natural notice to sailors in the dark, that they may be cautious. 3. They took the hint, and, fearing rocks near the shore, *they cast anchor, and wished for the day*; they durst not go forward for fear of rocks, and yet would not go back in hope of shelter, but they would wait for the morning, and heartily wished for it; who can blame them when the affair came to a crisis? When they had light, there was no land to be seen; now that there was land near them, they had no light to see it by; no marvel then they wished for day. When those that fear God *walk in darkness, and have no light*, yet let them not say, *The Lord has forsaken us, or Our God has forgotten us*; but let them do

as these mariners did, cast anchor, and wish for the day, and be assured that the day will dawn. *Hope is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil*. Hold fast by that, think not of putting to sea again, but abide by Christ, and wait till the day break, and the shadows flee away.

III. The defeating of the sailors' attempt to quit the ship; here was a new danger added to their distress, which they narrowly escaped. Observe, 1. The treacherous design of the seamen, and that was to leave the sinking ship, which, though a piece of wisdom in others, yet in those that were entrusted with the care of it was the basest fraud that could be (v. 30): *They were about to flee out of the ship*, concluding no other than that when it ran ashore it must be broken all to pieces; having the command of the boat, the project was to get all of them into that, and so save themselves, and leave all the rest to perish. To cover this vile design, they pretended they would *cast anchors out of the fore-ship*, or carry them further off, and in order to this *they let down the boat*, which they had taken in (v. 16, 17), and were *going into it*, having agreed among themselves, when they were in to make straight for the shore. The treacherous seamen are like the treacherous shepherd, who flees when he sees the danger coming, and there is most need of his help, John x. 12. Thus true is that of Solomon, *Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth or a foot out of joint*. Let us therefore cease from man. Paul had, in God's name, assured them that they should come safely to land, but they will rather trust their own refuge of lies than God's word and truth. 2. Paul's discovery of it, and protestation against it, v. 31. They all saw them preparing to go into the boat, but were deceived by the pretence they made; only Paul saw through it, and gave notice to the centurion and the soldiers concerning it, and told them plainly, *Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved*. The skill of a mariner is seen in a storm, and, in the distress of the ship, then is the proper time for him to exert himself. Now the greatest difficulty of all was before them, and therefore the seamen were now more necessary than ever yet; it was indeed not by any skill of theirs that *they were brought to land*, for it was quite beyond their skill, but, now that they are near land, they must use their art to bring the ship to it. When God has done that for us which we could not, we must then in his strength help ourselves. Paul speaks humanly, when he says, *You cannot be saved except these abide in the ship*; and he does not at all weaken the assurances he had divinely given that they should infallibly be saved. God, who appointed the end, that *they should be saved*, appointed the means that they should be saved by the help of



these seamen; though, if they had gone off, no doubt God would have made his word good some other way. Paul speaks as a prudent man, not as a prophet, when he says, "These are necessary to your preservation. Duty is ours, events are God's; and we do not trust God, but tempt him, when we say, 'We put ourselves under his protection,' and do not use proper means, such as are within our power, for our own preservation." 3. The effectual defeat of it by the soldiers, v. 32. It was no time to stand arguing the case with the seamen, and therefore they made no more ado, but cut the ropes of the boat, and, though it might otherwise have done them service in their present distress, they chose rather to let it fall off, and lose it, than suffer it to do them this disservice. And now the seamen, being forced to stay in the ship whether they would or no, are forced likewise to work for the safety of the ship as hard as they could, because if the rest perish they must perish with them.

IV. The new life which Paul put into the company, by cheerfully inviting them to take some refreshment, and by the repeated assurances he gave them that they should all of them have their lives given them for a prey. Happy they who had such a one as Paul in their company, who not only had correspondence with Heaven, but was of a hearty lively spirit with those about him, that sharpened the countenance of his friend, as iron sharpens iron. Such a friend in distress, when without are fightings and within are fears, is a friend indeed. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel, Prov. xxvii. 9. Such was Paul's here to his companions in tribulation. The day was coming on: those that wish for the day, let them wait awhile, and they shall have what they wish for. The dawning of the day revived them a little, and then Paul got them together. 1. He chid them for their neglect of themselves, that they had so far given way to fear and despair as to forget or not to mind their food: *This is the fourteenth day that you have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing*; and that is not well, v. 33. Not that they had all, or any of them, continued fourteen days without any food, but they had not had any set meal, as they used to have, all that time; they ate very little, next to nothing. Or, "You have continued fasting, that is, you have lost your stomach; you have had no appetite at all to your food, nor any relish of it, through prevailing fear and despair." A very disconsolate state is thus expressed (Ps. cii. 4), *I forget to eat my bread*. It is a sin to starve the body, and to deny it its necessary supports; he is an unnatural man indeed that hateth his own flesh, and does not nourish and cherish it; and it is a sore evil under the sun to have a sufficiency of the good things of this life, and not to have power to use them,

Eccl. vi. 2. If this arise from the sorrow of the world, and from any inordinate fear or trouble, it is so far from excusing it that it is another sin, it is discontent, it is distrust of God, it is all wrong. What folly is it to die for fear of dying! But thus the sorrow of the world works death, while joy in God is life and peace in the greatest distresses and dangers. 2. He courts them to their food (v. 34): *"Wherefore I pray you to take some meat"*. We have a hard struggle before us, must get to shore as well as we can; if our bodies be weak through fasting, we shall not be able to help ourselves." The angel bade Elijah, *Arise and eat*, for otherwise he would find the journey too great for him, 1 Kings xix. 7. So Paul will have these people eat, or otherwise the waves will be too hard for them: *I pray you, παρακαλῶ, "I exhort you, if you will be ruled by me, take some nourishment; though you have no appetite to it, though you have fasted away your stomach, yet let reason bring you to it, for this is for your health, or rather your preservation, or safety, at this time; it is for your salvation, you cannot without nourishment have strength to shift for your lives."* As he that will not labour, let him not eat; so he that means to labour must eat. Weak and trembling Christians, that give way to doubts and fears about their spiritual state; continue fasting from the Lord's supper, and fasting from divine consolations, and then complain they cannot go on in their spiritual work and warfare; and it is owing to themselves. If they would feed and feast as they ought, upon the provision Christ has made for them, they would be strengthened, and it would be for their souls' health and salvation. 3. He assures them of their preservation: *There shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you*. It is a proverbial expression, denoting a complete indemnity. It is used 1 Kings i. 52; Luke xxi. 18. "You cannot eat for fear of dying; I tell you, you are sure of living, and therefore eat. You will come to shore wet and cold, but sound wind and limb; your hair wet, but not a hair lost." 4. He himself spread their table for them; for none of them had any heart to do it, they were all so dispirited: *When he had thus spoken, he took bread, fetched it from the ship's stores, to which every one might safely have access when none of them had an appetite*. They were not reduced to short allowance, as sailors sometimes are when they are kept longer at sea than they expected by distress of weather; they had plenty, but what good did that do them, when they had no stomach? We have reason to be thankful to God that we have not only food to our appetite, but appetite to our food; that our soul abhors not even dainty meat (Job xxxiii. 20), through sickness or sorrow. 5. He was chaplain to the ship, and they had reason to be proud of their chaplain. He gave thanks to God in presence of them all



We have reason to think he had often prayed with Luke and Aristarchus, and what others there were among them that were Christians, that they prayed daily together; but whether he had before this prayed with the whole company promiscuously is not certain. Now *he gave thanks to God, in presence of them all*, that they were alive, and had been preserved hitherto, and that they had a promise that their lives should be preserved in the imminent peril now before them; he gave thanks for the provision they had, and begged a blessing upon it. We must in every thing give thanks; and must particularly have an eye to God in receiving our food, for it is sanctified to us by the word of God and prayer, and is to be received with thanksgiving. Thus the curse is taken off from it, and we obtain a covenant-right to it and a covenant-blessing upon it, 1 Tim. iv. 3—5. And it is not by bread alone that man lives, but by the word of God, which must be met with prayer. He gave thanks in presence of them all, not only to show that he served a Master he was not ashamed of, but to invite them into his service too. If we crave a blessing upon our meat, and give thanks for it in a right manner, we shall not only keep up a comfortable communion with God ourselves, but credit our profession, and recommend it to the good opinion of others. 6. He set them a good example: *When he had given thanks, he broke the bread* (it was sea-biscuit) *and he began to eat*. Whether they would be encouraged or no, he would; if they would be sullen, and, like froward children, refuse their victuals because they had not every thing to their mind, he would eat his meat, and be thankful. Those that teach others are inexcusable if they do not themselves do as they teach, and the most effectual way of preaching is by example. 7. It had a happy influence upon them all (v. 36). *Then were they all of good cheer*. They then ventured to believe the message God sent them by Paul when they plainly perceived that Paul believed it himself, who was in the same common danger with them. Thus God sends good tidings to the perishing world of mankind by those who are of themselves, and in the same common danger with themselves, who are sinners too, and must be saved, if ever they be saved, in the same way in which they persuade others to venture; for it is a common salvation which they bring the tidings of; and it is an encouragement to people to commit themselves to Christ as their Saviour when those who invite them to do so make it to appear that they do so themselves. It is here upon this occasion that the number of the persons is set down, which we took notice of before: *they were in all two hundred threescore and sixteen souls*. See how many may be influenced by the good example of one. *They did all eat*, nay, *they did all eat enough* (v. 38), they were satiated with food, or filled with it; *they made a hearty meal*. This explains

the meaning of *their fasting before for fourteen days*; not that they did not eat during all that time, but they never had enough all that time, as they had now. 8. They once more lightened the ship, that it might escape the better in the shock it was now to have. They had before thrown *the wares and the tackle overboard*, and now *the wheat*, the victuals and provisions they had; better they should sink the food than that it should sink them. See what good reason our Saviour had to call our bodily food meat that perishes. We may ourselves be under a necessity of throwing that away to save our lives which we had gathered and laid up for the support of our lives. It is probable that the ship was overloaded with the multitude of the passengers (for this comes in just after the account of the number of them) and that this obliged them so often to lighten the ship.

V. Their putting to shore, and the staving of the ship in the adventure. It was about break of day when they ate their meat, and when it was quite day they began to look about them; and here we are told, 1. *That they knew not where they were*; they could not tell what country it was they were now upon the coast of, whether it was Europe, Asia, or Africa, for each had shores washed by the Adriatic Sea. It is probable that these seamen had often sailed this way, and thought they knew every country they came near perfectly well, and yet here they were at a loss. *Let not the wise man then glory in his wisdom*, since it may perhaps fail him thus egregiously even in his own profession. 2. *They observed a creek with a level shore, into which they hoped to thrust the ship*, v. 39. Though they knew not what country it was, nor whether the inhabitants were friends or foes, civil or barbarous, they determined to cast themselves upon their mercy; it was dry land, which would be very welcome to those that had been so long at sea. It was a pity but they had had some help from the shore, a pilot sent them, that knew the coast, who might steer their ship in, or another second ship, to take some of the men on board. Those who live on the sea-coast have often opportunity of succouring those who are in distress at sea, and of saving precious lives, and they ought to do their utmost in order to it, with all readiness and cheerfulness; for it is a great sin, and very provoking to God, to forbear to deliver those that are driven unto death, and are ready to be slain; and it will not serve for an excuse to say, *Behold, we knew it not*, when either we did, or might, and should, have known it, Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. I have been told there are some, and in our own nation too, who when from the sea-coast they see a ship in distress and at a loss will, by misguiding fires or otherwise, purposely lead them into danger, that the lives may be lost, and they may have the plunder of the ship. One can scarcely believe that any of the human species can possibly



be so wicked, so barbarously inhuman, and can have so much of the devil in them; if there be, let them know of a truth that they shall have judgment without mercy who have shown no mercy. 3. They made straight to the shore with wind and tide (v. 40): *They took up the anchors, the four anchors which they cast out of the stern*, v. 29. Some think that they took pains to weigh them up, hoping they should have use for them again at the shore; others that they did it with such precipitation that they were forced to cut the cables and leave them; the original will admit either. *They then committed themselves to the sea*, the wind standing fair to carry them into the port, and *they loosed the rudder-bands*, which were fastened during the storm for the greater steadiness of the ship, but, now that they were *putting into the port*, were loosed, that the pilot might steer with the greater freedom; *they then hoisted up the main-sail to the wind, and made towards shore*. The original words here used for the *rudder-bands* and the *main-sail* find the critics a great deal of work to accommodate them to the modern terms; but they need not give us any difficulty who are content to know that when they saw the shore they hastened to it as fast as they could, and perhaps made more haste than good speed. And should not a poor soul that has long been struggling with winds and tempests in this world long to put into the safe and quiet haven of everlasting rest? Should it not get clear from all that which fastens it to this earth, and straitens the out-goings of its pious and devout affections heavenward? And should it not hoist up the main-sail of faith to the wind of the Spirit, and so with longing desires make to shore? 4. They made a shift among them to *run the ship aground*, in a shelf or bed of sand, as it should seem, or an isthmus, or neck of land, washed with the sea on both sides, and therefore two seas are said to meet upon it, and *there the forepart stuck fast*; and then, when it had no liberty to play, as a ship has when it rides at anchor, but remained immovable, *the hinder part would soon be broken of course by the violence of the waves*. Whether the seamen did not do their part, being angry that they were disappointed in their design to escape, and therefore wilfully ran the ship aground, or whether we may suppose that they did their utmost to save it, but God in his providence overruled, for the fulfilling of Paul's word, *that the ship must be lost* (v. 22), I cannot say; but this we are sure of *that God will confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsel of his messengers*, Isa. xlv. 26. The ship, that had strangely weathered the storm in the vast ocean, where it had room to roll, is dashed to pieces when it sticks fast. Thus if the heart fixes in the world, in love and affection, and adherence to it, it is lost. Satan's temptations beat against it, and it is gone; but, as long as it

keeps above the world, though it be tossed with its cares and tumults, there is hope of it. They had the shore in view, and yet suffered shipwreck in the harbour, to teach us never to be secure.

VI. A particular danger that Paul and the rest of the prisoners were in, besides their share in the common calamity, and their deliverance from it. 1. In this critical moment, when every man hung in doubt of his life, *the soldiers advised the killing of the prisoners that were committed to their custody, and whom they were to give an account of, lest any of them should swim out and escape*, v. 42. There was no great danger of that, for they could not escape far, weak and weary as they were; and, under the eye of so many soldiers that had the charge of them, it was not likely they should attempt it; and if it should so happen, though they might be obnoxious to the law for a permissive escape, yet in such a case as this equity would certainly relieve them. But it was a brutish barbarous motion, and so much the worse that they were thus prodigal of other people's lives when without a miracle of mercy they must lose their own. 2. The centurion, for Paul's sake, quashed this motion presently. Paul, who was his prisoner, had found favour with him, as Joseph with the captain of the guard. Julius, though he despised Paul's advice (v. 11), yet afterwards saw a great deal of cause to respect him, and therefore, being *willing to save Paul*, he prevented the execution of that bloody project, and *in favorem vitæ—from a regard to his life*, he kept them from their purpose. It does not appear that they were any of them malefactors convicted, but only suspected, and waiting their trial, and in such a case as this better ten guilty ones should escape than one that was innocent be slain. As God had saved all in the ship for Paul's sake, so here the centurion saves all the prisoners for his sake; such a diffusive good is a good man.

VII. The saving of the lives of all the persons in the ship, by the wonderful providence of God. When the ship broke under them, surely there was but a step between them and death; and yet infinite mercy interposed, and that step was not stepped. 1. Some were saved by swimming: *The centurion commanded his soldiers in the first place, as many of them as could swim, to get to land first, and to be ready to receive the prisoners, and prevent their escape*. The Romans trained up their youth, among other exercises, to that of swimming, and it was often of service to them in their wars: Julius Cæsar was a famous swimmer. It may be very useful to those who deal much at sea, but otherwise perhaps more lives have been lost by swimming in sport, and learning to swim, than have been saved by swimming for need. 2. The rest with much ado scrambled to the shore, some on boards that they had loosed with them in the ship, and others on the

*broken pieces of the ship*, every one making the best shift he could for himself and his friends, and the more busy because they were assured their labour should not be in vain; but so it came to pass that through the good providence of God none of them miscarried, none of them were by accident turned off, but they *escaped all safely to land*. See here an instance of the special providence of God in the preservation of people's lives, and particularly in the deliverance of many from perils by water, ready to sink, and yet kept from sinking, *the deep from swallowing them up and the water-floods from overflowing them*, the storm turned into a calm. They were rescued from the dreaded sea, and brought to the desired haven. *O that men could praise the Lord for his goodness!* Ps. cvii. 30, 31. Here was an instance of the performance of a particular word of promise which God gave, that all the persons in this ship should be saved for Paul's sake. Though there be great difficulty in the way of the promised salvation, yet it shall without fail be accomplished; and even the wreck of the ship may furnish out means for the saving of the lives, and, when all seems to be gone, all proves to be safe, though it be *on boards, and broken pieces of the ship*.

## CHAP. XXVIII.

We are the more concerned to take notice of and to improve what is here recorded concerning blessed Paul because, after the story of this chapter, we hear no more of him in the sacred history, though we have a great deal of him yet before us in his epistles. We have attended him through several chapters from one judgment-seat to another, and could at last have taken leave of him with the more pleasure if we had left him at liberty; but in this chapter we are to condole with him, and yet congratulate him. 1. We condole with him as a poor shipwrecked passenger, stripped of all; and yet congratulate him, 1. As singularly owned by his God in his distress, preserved himself from receiving hurt by a viper that fastened on his hand (ver. 1-6), and being made an instrument of much good in the island on which they were cast, in healing many that were sick, and particularly the father of Publius, the chief man of the island, ver. 7-9. 2. As much respected by the people there, ver. 10. 3. We condole with him as a poor confined prisoner, carried to Rome under the notion of a criminal removed by "habeas corpus" (ver. 11-16), and yet we congratulate him, 1. Upon the respect shown him by the Christians at Rome, who came a great way to meet him, ver. 15. 2. Upon the favour he found with the captain of the guard, into whose custody he was delivered, who suffered him to dwell by himself, and did not put him in the common prison, ver. 16. 3. Upon the free conference he had with the Jews at Rome, both about his own affair (ver. 17-22) and upon the subject of the Christian religion in general (ver. 23), the issue of which was that God was glorified, many were edified, the rest left inexcusable, and the apostles justified in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, ver. 24-29. 4. Upon the undisturbed liberty he had to preach the gospel to all comers in his own house for two years together, ver. 30, 31.

**A**ND when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. 2 And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. 3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No

doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. 7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. 8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. 9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: 10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary.

What a great variety of places and circumstances do we find Paul in! He was a planet, and not a fixed star. Here we have him in an island to which, in all probability, he had never come if he had not been thrown upon it by a storm; and yet it seems God has work for him to do here. Even stormy winds fulfil God's counsel, and an ill wind indeed it is that blows nobody any good; this ill wind blew good to the island of Melita; for it gave them Paul's company for three months, who was a blessing to every place he came to. This island was called Melita, lying between Sicily and Africa, twenty miles long, and twelve broad; it lies furthest from the continent of any island in the Mediterranean; it is about sixty miles from Sicily. It has been famous since for the knights of Malta, who, when the Turks overran that part of Christendom, made a noble stand, and gave some check to the progress of their arms. Now here we have,

I. The kind reception which the inhabitants of this island gave to the distressed strangers that were shipwrecked on their coast (v. 2): *The barbarous people showed us no little kindness*. God had promised that there should be no loss of any man's life; and, *as for God, his work is perfect*. If they had escaped the sea, and when they came ashore had perished for cold or want, it had been all one; therefore Providence continues its care of them, and what benefits we receive by the hand of man must be acknowledged to come from the hand of God; for



every creature is that to us, and no more, that he makes it to be, and when he pleases, as he can make enemies to be at peace, so he can make strangers to be friends, friends in need, and those are friends indeed—friends *in adversity*, and that is *the time that a brother is born for*. Observe, 1. The general notice taken of the kindness which the natives of Malta showed to Paul and his company. They are called *barbarous people*, because they did not, in language and customs, conform either to the Greeks or Romans, who looked (superciliously enough) upon all but themselves as barbarians, though otherwise civilized enough, and perhaps in some cases more civil than they. These barbarous people, however they were called so, were full of humanity: *They showed us no little kindness*. So far were they from making a prey of this shipwreck, as many, I fear, who are called Christian people, would have done, that they laid hold of it as an opportunity of showing mercy. *The Samaritan* is a better neighbour to the poor wounded man *than the priest or Levite*. And verily we have not found greater humanity among Greeks, or Romans, or Christians, than among these barbarous people; and it is written for our imitation, that we may hence learn to be compassionate to those that are in distress and misery, and to relieve and succour them to the utmost of our ability, as those *that know we ourselves are also in the body*. We should be ready to *entertain strangers, as Abraham, who sat at his tent door to invite passengers in* (Heb. xiii. 2), but especially strangers in distress, as these were. *Honour all men*. If Providence hath so *appointed the bounds of our habitation* as to give us an opportunity of being frequently serviceable to persons at a loss, we should not place it among the inconveniences of our lot, but the advantages of it; because *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. Who knows but these barbarous people had their lot cast in this island for such a time as this! 2. A particular instance of their kindness: *They kindled a fire*, in some large hall or other, and *they received us every one*—made room for us about the fire, and bade us all welcome, without asking either what country we were of or what religion. In swimming *to the shore*, and coming *on the broken pieces of the ship*, we must suppose that they were sadly wet, that they had not a dry thread on them; and, as if that were not enough, to complete the deluge, waters from above met those from below, and it rained so hard that this would wet them to the skin presently; and *it was a cold rain too*, so that they wanted nothing so much as a good fire (for they had eaten heartily but just before on ship-board), and this they got for them presently, *to warm them, and dry their clothes*. It is sometimes as much a piece of charity to poor families to supply them with fuel as with food or raiment. *Be you warmed*, is as necessary as, *Be you filled*.

When in the extremities of bad weather we find ourselves fenced against the rigours of the season, by the accommodations of a warm house, bed, clothes, and a good fire, we should think how many lie exposed *to the present rain, and to the cold*, and pity them, and pray for them, and help them if we can.

II. The further danger that Paul was in by a viper's fastening on his hand, and the unjust construction that the people put upon it. Paul is among strangers, and appears one of the meanest and most contemptible of the company, therefore God distinguishes him, and soon causes him to be taken notice of.

1. When the fire was to be made, and to be made bigger, that so great a company might all have the benefit of it, Paul was as busy as any of them in gathering sticks, v. 3. Though he was free from all, and of greater account than any of them, *yet he made himself servant of all*. Paul was an industrious active man, and loved to be doing when any thing was to be done, and never contrived to take his ease. Paul was a humble self-denying man, and would stoop to any thing by which he might be serviceable, even to the gathering of sticks to make a fire of. We should reckon nothing below us but sin, and be willing to condescend to the meanest offices, if there be occasion, for the good of our brethren. The people were ready to help them; yet Paul, wet and cold as he is, will not throw it all upon them, but will help himself. Those that receive benefit by the fire should help to carry fuel to it.

2. The sticks being old dry rubbish, it happened there was a viper among them, that layas dead till it came to the heat, and then revived, or lay quiet till it felt the fire, and then was provoked, and flew at him that unawares threw it into the fire, and *fastened upon his hand*, v. 3. Serpents and such venomous creatures commonly lie among sticks; hence we read of him *that leans on the wall, and a serpent bites him*, Amos v. 19. It was so common that people were by it frightened from tearing hedges (Eccl. x. 8): *Whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him*. As there is a snake under the green grass, so there is often under the dry leaves. See how many perils human life is exposed to, and what danger we are in from the inferior creatures, which have many of them become enemies to men, since men became rebels to God; and what a mercy it is that we are preserved from them as we are. We often meet with that which is mischievous where we expect that which is beneficial; and many come by hurt when they are honestly employed, and in the way of their duty.

3. The barbarous people concluded that Paul, being a prisoner, was certainly a murderer, who had appealed to Rome, to escape justice in his own country, and that this viper was sent by divine justice to be the avenger of blood; or, if they were not aware that he



was a prisoner, they supposed that he was in his flight; and *when they saw the venomous animal hang on his hand*, which it seems he could not, or would not, immediately throw off, but let it hang, they concluded, "*No doubt this man is a murderer, has shed innocent blood, and therefore, though he has escaped the sea, yet divine vengeance pursues him, and fastens upon him now that he is pleasing himself with the thoughts of that escape, and will not suffer him to live.*" Now in this we may see,

(1.) Some of the discoveries of natural light. They were barbarous people, perhaps had no books nor learning among them, and yet they knew naturally, [1.] That there is a God that governs the world, and a providence that presides in all occurrences, that things do not come to pass by chance, no, not such a thing as this, but by divine direction. [2.] That evil pursues sinners, that there are good works which God will reward and wicked works which he will punish; there is a divine *nemesis*—a vengeance, which sooner or later will reckon for enormous crimes. They believe not only that there is a God, but that this God hath said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*, even to death. [3.] That murder is a heinous crime, and which shall not long go unpunished, that *whoso sheds man's blood, if his blood be not shed by man (by the magistrate, as it ought to be) it shall be shed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, who is the avenger of wrong.* Those that think they shall go unpunished in any evil way will be judged out of the mouth of these barbarians, who could say, without book, *Woe to the wicked, for it shall be ill with them, for the reward of their hands shall be given them.* Those who, because they have escaped many judgments, are secure, and say, *We shall have peace though we go on*, and have their hearts so much the more set to do evil because *sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily*, may learn from these illiterate people that, though malefactors have escaped the vengeance of the sea, yet there is no outrunning divine justice, *vengeance suffers not to live.* In Job's time you might ask *those that go by the way*, ask the next body you met, and they would tell you that *the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction.*

(2.) Some of the mistakes of natural light, which needed to be rectified by divine revelation. In two things their knowledge was defective:—[1.] That they thought all wicked people were punished in this life; that divine vengeance never suffers great and notorious sinners, such as murderers are, to live long; but that, if *they come up out of the pit, they shall be taken in the snare* (Jer. xlviii. 43, 44), if *they flee from a lion, a bear shall meet them* (Amos v. 19), if they escape being drowned, a viper shall fasten upon them; whereas it is not so. The wicked, even murderers, sometimes live, become old, yea, are mighty in power; for the day of vengeance is to come

in the other world, *the great day of wrath*; and though some are made examples of in this world, to prove that there is a God and a providence, yet many are left unpunished, to prove that there is a judgment to come. [2.] That they thought all who were remarkably afflicted in this life were wicked people; that a man on whose hand a viper fastens may thence be judged to be a murderer, as if those on whom the tower in Siloam fell must needs be greater sinners than all in Jerusalem. This mistake Job's friends went upon, in their judgment upon his case; but divine revelation sets this matter in a true light—that all things come ordinarily alike to all, that good men are oftentimes greatly afflicted in this life, for the exercise and improvement of their faith and patience.

4. When he shook off the viper from his hand, yet they expected that divine vengeance would ratify the censure they had passed, and *that he would have swollen and burst, through the force of the poison, or that he would have fallen down dead suddenly.* See how apt men are, when once they have got an ill opinion of a man, though ever so unjust, to abide by it, and to think that God must necessarily confirm and ratify their peevish sentence. It was well they did not knock him down themselves, when they saw he did not swell and fall down; but so considerate they are as to let Providence work, and to attend the motions of it.

III. Paul's deliverance from the danger, and the undue construction the people put upon this. The viper's fastening on his hand was a trial of his faith; and it was found to praise, and honour, and glory: for, 1. It does not appear that it put him into any fright or confusion at all. He did not shriek or start, nor, as it would be natural for us to do, throw it off with terror and precipitation; for he suffered it to hang on so long that the people had time to take notice of it and to make their remarks upon it. Such a wonderful presence of mind he had, and such a composure, as no man could have upon such a sudden accident, but by the special aids of divine grace, and the actual belief and consideration of that word of Christ concerning his disciples (Mark xvi 18), *They shall take up serpents.* This it is to have the heart fixed, *trusting in God.* 2. He carelessly shook off the viper into the fire, without any difficulty, calling for help, or any means used to loosen its hold; and it is probable that it was consumed in the fire. Thus, in the strength of the grace of Christ, believers shake off the temptations of Satan, with a holy resolution, saying, as Christ did, *Get thee behind me, Satan; the Lord rebuke thee*; and thus they keep themselves, that the wicked one toucheth them not, so as to fasten upon them, 1 John v. 18. When we despise the censures and reproaches of men, and look upon them with a holy contempt, having the testimony of conscience for us, then we do, as Paul here, *shake off the viper into the fire.* It



does us no harm, except we fret at it, or be deterred by it from our duty, or be provoked to render railing for railing. 3. He was none the worse. Those that thought it would have been his death *looked a great while, but saw no harm at all come to him.* God hereby intended to make him remarkable among these barbarous people, and so to make way for the entertainment of the gospel among them. It is reported that after this no venomous creature would live in that island, any more than in Ireland; but I do not find that the matter of fact is confirmed, though the popish writers speak of it with assurance. 4. They then magnified him as much as before they had vilified him: *They changed their minds, and said that he was a god—an immortal god;* for they thought it impossible that a mortal man should have a viper hang on his hand so long and be never the worse. See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how it turns with the wind, and how apt it is to run into extremes both ways; from *sacrificing to Paul and Barnabas to stoning them;* and here, from condemning him as a murderer to idolizing him as a god.

IV. The miraculous cure of an old gentleman that was ill of a fever, and of others that were otherwise diseased, by Paul. And, with these confirmations of the doctrine of Christ, no doubt there was a faithful publication of it. Observe, 1. The kind entertainment which *Publius, the chief man of the island,* gave to these distressed strangers; he had a considerable estate in the island, and some think was governor, and he *received them and lodged them three days very courteously,* that they might have time to furnish themselves in other places at the best hand. It is happy when God gives a large heart to those to whom he has given a large estate. It became him, who was the chief man of the island, to be most hospitable and generous,—who was the richest man, to be rich in good works. 2. The illness of the father of *Publius:* He *lay sick of a fever and a bloody flux,* which often go together, and, when they do, are commonly fatal. Providence ordered it that he should be ill just at this time, that the cure of him might be a present recompence to *Publius* for his generosity, and the cure of him by miracle a recompence particularly for his kindness to Paul, whom he received in the name of a prophet, and had this prophet's reward. 3. His cure: Paul took cognizance of his case, and though we do not find he was urged to it, for they had no thought of any such thing, yet he entered in, not as a physician to heal him by medicines, but as an apostle to heal him by miracle; and he prayed to God, in Christ's name, for his cure, and then laid his hands on him, and he was perfectly well in an instant. Though he must needs be in years, yet he recovered his health, and the lengthening out of his life yet longer would be a mercy to him. 4. The cure of many others, who were invited by this

cure to apply to Paul. If he can heal diseases so easily, so effectually, he shall soon have patients enough; and he *bade them all welcome,* and sent them away with what they came for. He did not plead that he was a stranger there, thrown accidentally among them, under no obligations to them, and waiting to be gone by the first opportunity, and therefore might be excused from receiving their applications. No, a good man will endeavour to do good wherever the providence of God casts him. Paul reckoned himself a debtor, not only to the Greeks, but to the Barbarians, and thanked God for an opportunity of being useful among them. Nay, he was particularly obliged to these inhabitants of Malta for the seasonable shelter and supply they had afforded him, and hereby he did in effect discharge his quarters, which should encourage us to entertain strangers, for some thereby have entertained angels and some apostles unawares. God will not be behind-hand with any for kindness shown to his people in distress. We have reason to think that Paul with these cures preached the gospel to them, and that, coming thus confirmed and recommended, it was generally embraced among them. And, if so, never were any people so enriched by a shipwreck on their coasts as these Maltese were.

V. The grateful acknowledgment which even these barbarous people made of the kindness Paul had done them, in preaching Christ unto them. They were civil to him, and to the other ministers that were with him, who, it is likely, were assisting to him in preaching among them, v. 10. 1. They *honoured us with many honours.* They showed them all possible respect; they saw God honoured them, and therefore they justly thought themselves obliged to honour them, and thought nothing too much by which they might testify the esteem they had for them. Perhaps they made them free of their island by naturalizing them, and admitted them members of their guilds and fraternities. The faithful preachers of the gospel are worthy of a double honour, especially when they succeed in their labours. 2. *When we departed, they loaded us with such things as were necessary:* or, they put on board such things as we had occasion for. Paul could not labour with his hands here, for he had nothing to work upon, and therefore accepted the kindness of the good people of Melita, not as a fee for his cures (freely he had received, and freely he gave), but as the relief of his wants, and theirs that were with him. And, having reaped of their spiritual things, it was but just they should make them those returns, 1 Cor. ix. 11.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. 12

And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days. 13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: 14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. 15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. 16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

We have here the progress of Paul's voyage towards Rome, and his arrival there at length. A rough and dangerous voyage he had hitherto had, and narrowly escaped with his life; but after a storm comes a calm: the latter part of his voyage was easy and quiet.

Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,  
Tendimus ad Latium

Through various hazards and events we move  
To Latium.

Tendimus ad cælum.  
We make for heaven.

———— Dabit Deus his quoque finem.  
To these a period will be fixed by Heaven.

We have here,

I. Their leaving Malta. That island was a happy shelter to them, but it was not their home; when they are refreshed they must put to sea again. The difficulties and discouragements we have met with in our Christian course must not hinder us from pressing forward. Notice is here taken, 1. Of the time of their departure: *After three months*, the three winter months. Better lie by, though they lay upon charges, than go forward while the season was dangerous. Paul had warned them against venturing to sea in winter weather, and they would not take the warning; but, now that they had learned it by the difficulties and dangers they had gone through, he needed not to warn them: their learning did them good when they had paid dearly for it. Experience is therefore called the mistress of fools, because those are fools that will not learn till experience has taught them. 2. Of the ship in which they departed. It was in a ship of Alexandria; so was that which was cast away, *ch. xxvii. 6*. This ship had *wintered in that isle*, and was safe. See what different issues there are of men's undertakings in this world. Here were two ships, both of Alexandria, both bound for Italy, both thrown upon the same island, but one is wrecked there and the other is saved. Such occurrences may often be observed.

Providence sometimes favours those that dear in the world, and prospers them, that people may be encouraged to set their hands to worldly business; at other times Providence crosses them, that people may be warned not to set their hearts upon it. Events are thus varied, that we may learn both how to want and how to abound. The historian takes notice of the sign of the ship, which probably gave it its name: it was *Castor and Pollux*. Those little foolish pagan deities, which the poets had made to preside over storms and to protect seafaring men, as gods of the sea, were painted or graven upon the fore-part of the ship, and thence the ship took its name. I suppose this is observed for no other reason than for the better ascertaining of the story, that ship being well known by that name and sign by all that dealt between Egypt and Italy. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that Luke mentions this circumstance to intimate the men's superstition, that they hoped they should have better sailing under this badge than they had had before.

II. Their landing in or about Italy, and the pursuing of their journey towards Rome. 1. They landed first at Syracuse in Sicily, the chief city of that island. There they *tarried three days*, probably having some goods to put ashore, or some merchandise to make there; for it seems to have been a trading voyage that this ship made. Paul had now his curiosity gratified with the sight of places he had often heard of and wished to see, particularly Syracuse, a place of great antiquity and note; and yet, it should seem, there were no Christians there. 2. From Syracuse they came to Rhegium, a city in Italy, directly opposite to Messina in Sicily, belonging to the kingdom of Calabria or Naples. There, it seems, they staid one day; and a very formal story the Romish legends tell of Paul's preaching here at this time, and the fish coming to the shore to hear him,—that with a candle he set a stone pillar on fire, and by that miracle convinced the people of the truth of his doctrine, and they were many of them baptized, and he ordained Stephen, one of his companions in this voyage, to be their bishop,—and all this, they tell you, was done in this one day; whereas it does not appear that they did so much as go ashore, but only came to an anchor in the road. 3. From Rhegium they came to Puteoli, a sea-port town not far from Naples, now called *Pozzolana*. The ship of Alexandria was bound for that port, and therefore there Paul, and the rest that were bound for Rome, were put ashore, and went the remainder of their way by land. At Puteoli they *found brethren*, Christians. Who brought the knowledge of Christ hither we are not told, but here it was, so wonderfully did the leaven of the gospel diffuse itself. God has many that serve and worship him in places where we little think he has. And observe, (1.) Though it is probable there were but few brethren in Puteoli, yet Paul found



them out; either they heard of him, or he enquired them out, but as it were by instinct they got together. Brethren in Christ should find out one another, and keep up communion with each other, as those of the same country do in a foreign land. (2.) They desired Paul and his companions to *tarry with them seven days*, that is, to forecast to stay at least one Lord's day with them, and to assist them in their public worship that day. They knew not whether ever they should see Paul at Puteoli again, and therefore he must not go without giving them a sermon or two, or more. And Paul was willing to allow them so much of his time; and the centurion under whose command Paul now was, perhaps having himself friends or business at Puteoli, agreed to stay one week there, to oblige Paul. 4. From Puteoli they went forward towards Rome; whether they travelled on foot, or whether they had beasts provided for them to ride on (as *ch. xxiii. 24*), does not appear; but to Rome they must go, and this was their last stage.

III. The meeting which the Christians at Rome gave to Paul. It is probable that notice was sent to them by the Christians at Puteoli, as soon as ever Paul had come thither, how long he intended to stay there, and when he would set forward for Rome, which gave an opportunity for this interview. Observe,

1. The great honour they did to Paul. They had heard much of his fame, what use God had made of him, and what eminent service he had done to the kingdom of Christ in the world, and to what multitudes of souls he had been a spiritual father. They had heard of his sufferings, and how God had owned him in them, and therefore they not only longed to see him, but thought themselves obliged to show him all possible respect, as a glorious advocate for the cause of Christ. He had some time ago written a long epistle to them, and a most excellent one, *the epistle to the Romans*, in which he had not only expressed his great kindness for them, but had given them a great many useful instructions, in return for which they show him this respect. They *went to meet him*, that they might bring him in state, as ambassadors and judges make their public entry, though he was a prisoner. Some of them went as far as *Appi-forum*, which was fifty-one miles from Rome; others to a place called the *Three Taverns*, which was twenty-eight miles (some reckon it thirty-three miles) from Rome. They are to be commended for it, that they were so far from being ashamed of him, or afraid of owning him, because he was a prisoner, that for that very reason they counted him worthy of double honour, and were the more careful to show him respect.

2. The great comfort Paul had in this. Now that he was drawing near to Rome, and perhaps heard at Puteoli what character the emperor Nero now had, and what a tyrant he had of late become, he began to have some

melancholy thoughts about his appeal to Cæsar, and the consequences of it. He was drawing near to Rome, where he had never been, where there were few that knew him or that he knew, and what things might befall him here he could not tell; but he began to grow dull upon it, till he met with these good people that came from Rome to show him respect; and *when he saw them*, (1.) He *thanked God*. We may suppose he thanked them for their civility, told them again and again how kindly he took it; but this was not all: he *thanked God*. Note, If our friends be kind to us, it is God that makes them so, that puts it into their hearts, and into the power of their hands, to be so, and we must give him the glory of it. He thanked God, no doubt, for the civility and generosity of the barbarous people at Melita, but much more for the pious care of the Christian people at Rome for him. When he saw so many Christians that were of Rome, he thanked God that the gospel of Christ had had such wonderful success there in the metropolis of the empire. When we go abroad, or but look abroad, into the world, and meet with those, even in strange places, that bear up Christ's name, and fear God, and serve him, we should lift up our hearts to heaven in thanksgiving; blessed be God that there are so many excellent ones on this earth, bad as it is. Paul had thanked God for the Christians at Rome before he had ever seen them, upon the report he had heard concerning them (*Rom. i. 8*): *I thank my God for you all*. But now that he saw them (and perhaps they appeared more fashionable and genteel people than most he had conversed with, or more grave, serious, and intelligent, than most) he *thanked God*. But this was not all: (2.) He *took courage*. It put new life into him, cheered up his spirits, and banished his melancholy, and now he can enter Rome a prisoner as cheerfully as ever he had entered Jerusalem at liberty. He finds there are those there who love and value him, and whom he may both converse with and consult with as his friends, which will take off much of the tediousness of his imprisonment, and the terror of his appearing before Nero. Note, It is an encouragement to those who are travelling towards heaven to meet with their fellow travellers, who are their *companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*. When we see the numerous and serious assemblies of good Christians, we should not only give thanks to God, but take courage to ourselves. And this is a good reason why respect should be shown to good ministers, especially when they are in sufferings, and have contempt put upon them, that it encourages them, and makes both their sufferings and their services more easy. Yet it is observable that though the Christians at Rome were now so respectful to Paul, and he had promised himself so much from their respect, yet they failed him when he most needed them; for he *says* (2

Tim. iv. 16), *At my first answer, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.* They could easily take a ride of forty or fifty miles to go and meet Paul, for the pleasantness of the journey; but to venture the displeasure of the emperor and the disobliging of other great men, by appearing in defence of Paul and giving evidence for him, here they desire to be excused; when it comes to this, they will rather ride as far out of town to miss him as now they did to meet him, which is an intimation to us to cease from man, and to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. The courage we take from his promises will never fail us, when we shall be ashamed of that which we took from men's compliments. *Let God be true, but every man a liar.*

IV. The delivering of Paul into custody at Rome, v. 16. He is now come to his journey's end. And, 1. He is still a prisoner. He had longed to see Rome, but, when he comes there, he is delivered, with other prisoners, to the *captain of the guard*, and can see no more of Rome than he will permit him. How many great men had made their entry into Rome, crowned and in triumph, who really were the plagues of their generation! But here a good man makes his entry into Rome, chained and triumphed over as a poor captive, who was really the greatest blessing to his generation. This thought is enough to put one for ever out of conceit with this world. 2. Yet he has some favour-shown him. He is a prisoner, but not a close prisoner, not in the common jail: *Paul was suffered to dwell by himself*, in some convenient private lodgings which his friends there provided for him, and a soldier was appointed to be his guard, who, we hope, was civil to him, and let him take all the liberty that could be allowed to a prisoner, for he must be very ill-natured indeed that could be so to such a courteous obliging man as Paul. Paul, being suffered to dwell by himself, could the better enjoy himself, and his friends, and his God, than if he had been lodged with the other prisoners. Note, This may encourage God's prisoners, that he can give them favour in the eyes of those that carry them captive (Ps. cvi. 46), as Joseph in the eyes of his keeper (Gen. xxxix. 21), and Jehoiachin in the eyes of the king of Babylon, 2 Kings xxv. 27, 28. When God does not deliver his people presently out of bondage, yet, if he either make it easy to them or them easy under it, they have reason to be thankful.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the

Romans. 18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had aught to accuse my nation of. 20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. 21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judæa concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. 22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

Paul, with a great deal of expense and hazard, is brought a prisoner to Rome, and when he has come nobody appears to prosecute him or lay any thing to his charge; but he must call his own cause; and here he represents it to the chief of the Jews at Rome. It was not long since, by an edict of Claudius, all the Jews were banished from Rome and kept out till his death; but, in the five years since then, many Jews had come thither, for the advantage of trade, though it does not appear that they were allowed any synagogue there or place of public worship; but these *chief of the Jews* were those of best figure among them, the most distinguished men of that religion, who had the best estates and interests. *Paul called them together*, being desirous to stand right in their opinion, and that there might be a good understanding between him and them. And here we are told,

I. What he said to them, and what account he gave them of his cause. He speaks respectfully to them, calls them men and brethren, and thereby intimates that he expects to be treated by them both as a man and as a brother, and engages to treat them as such and to tell them nothing but the truth; for *we are members one of another—all we are brethren*. Now, 1. He professes his own innocency, and that he had not given any just occasion to the Jews to bear him such an ill will as generally they did: "*I have committed nothing against the people of the Jews, have done nothing to the prejudice of their religion or civil liberties, have added no affliction to their present miseries, they know I have not; nor have I committed any thing against the customs of our fathers, either by abrogating or by innovating in religion.*" It is true Paul did not impose the customs of the fathers upon the Gentiles: they were never intended for them. But it is as true



that he never opposed them in the Jews, but did himself, when he was among them, conform to them. He never quarrelled with them for practising according to the usages of their own religion, but only for their enmity to the Gentiles, Gal. ii. 12. Paul had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had done his duty to the Jews. 2. He modestly complains of the hard usage he had met with—that, though he had given them no offence, yet he was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. If he had spoken the whole truth in this matter, it would have looked worse than it did upon the Jews, for they would have murdered him without any colour of law or justice if the Romans had not protected him; but, however, they accused him as a criminal, before Felix the governor, and, demanding judgment against him, were, in effect, delivering him prisoner into the hands of the Romans, when he desired no more than a fair and impartial trial by their own law. 3. He declares the judgment of the Roman governors concerning him, v. 18. They examined him, enquired into his case, heard what was to be said against him, and what he had to say for himself. The chief captain examined him, so did Felix, and Festus, and Agrippa, and they could find no cause of death in him; nothing appeared to the contrary but that he was an honest, quiet, conscientious, good man, and therefore they would never gratify the Jews with a sentence of death upon him; but, on the contrary, would have let him go, and have let him go on in his work too, and have given him no interruption, for they all heard him and liked his doctrine well enough. It was for the honour of Paul that those who most carefully examined his case acquitted him, and none condemned him but unheard, and such as were prejudiced against him. 4. He pleads the necessity he was under to remove himself and his cause to Rome; and that it was only in his own defence, and not with any design to recriminate, or exhibit a cross bill against the complainants, (v. 19): *When the Jews spoke against it*, and entered a caveat against his discharge, designing, if they could not have him condemned to die, yet to have him made a prisoner for life, he was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar, finding that the governors, one after another, stood so much in awe of the Jews that they could not discharge him, for fear of making him their enemies, which made it necessary for him to pray the assistance of the higher powers. This was all he aimed at in this appeal; not to accuse his nation, but only to vindicate himself. Every man has a right to plead in his own defence, who yet ought not to find fault with his neighbours. It is an invidious thing to accuse, especially to accuse a nation, such a nation. Paul made intercession for them, but never against them. The Roman government had at this time an ill opinion of

the Jewish nation, as factious, turbulent, disaffected, and dangerous; and it had been an easy thing for a man with such a fluent tongue as Paul had, a citizen of Rome, and so injured as he was, to have exasperated the emperor against the Jewish nation. But Paul would not for ever so much do such a thing; he was for making the best of every body, and not making bad worse. 5. He puts his sufferings upon the true footing, and gives them such an account of the reason of them as should engage them not only not to join with his persecutors against him, but to concern themselves for him, and to do what they could on his behalf (v. 20): “*For this cause I have called for you*, not to quarrel with you, for I have no design to incense the government against you, but to see you and speak with you as my countrymen, and men that I would keep up a correspondence with, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.” He carried the mark of his imprisonment about with him, and probably was chained to the soldier that kept him; and it was, (1.) Because he preached that the Messiah was come, who was the hope of Israel, he whom Israel hoped for. “Do not all the Jews agree in this, that the Messiah will be the glory of his people Israel? And therefore he is to be hoped for, and this Messiah I preach, and prove he is come. They would keep up such a hope of a Messiah yet to come as must end in a despair of him; I preach such a hope in a Messiah already come as must produce a joy in him. (2.) Because he preached that the resurrection of the dead would come. This also was the hope of Israel; so he had called it, *ch. xxiii. 6; xxiv. 15; xxvi. 6, 7*. “They would have you still expect a Messiah that would free you from the Roman yoke, and make you great and prosperous upon earth, and it is this that occupies their thoughts; and they are angry at me for directing their expectations to the great things of another world, and persuading them to embrace a Messiah who will secure those to them, and not external power and grandeur. I am for bringing you to the spiritual and eternal blessedness upon which our fathers by faith had their eye, and this is what they hate me for,—because I would take you off from that which is the cheat of Israel, and will be its shame and ruin, the notion of a temporal Messiah, and lead you to that which is the true and real hope of Israel, and the genuine sense of all the promises made to the fathers, a spiritual kingdom of holiness and love set up in the hearts of men, to be the pledge of, and preparative for, the joyful resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”

II. What was their reply. They own, 1. That they had nothing to say in particular against him; nor had any instructions to appear as his prosecutors before the emperor, either by letter or word of mouth (v. 21): “*We have neither received letters out of Judea*

concerning thee (have no orders to prosecute thee) nor have any of the brethren of the Jewish nation that have lately come up to Rome (as many occasions drew the Jews thither now that their nation was a province of that empire) shown or spoken any harm of thee." This was very strange, that that restless and inveterate rage of the Jews which had followed Paul wherever he went should not follow him to Rome, to get him condemned there. Some think they told a lie here, and had orders to prosecute him, but durst not own it, being themselves obnoxious to the emperor's displeasure, who though he had not, like his predecessors, banished them all from Rome, yet gave them no countenance there. But I am apt to think that what they said was true, and Paul now found he had gained the point he aimed at in appealing to Cæsar, which was to remove his cause into a court to which they durst not follow it. This was David's policy, and it was his security (1 Sam. xxvii. 1): *There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines, and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coasts of Israel; so shall I escape out of his hands*: and it proved so, v. 4. *When Saul heard that David had fled to Gath, he sought no more again for him*. Thus did Paul by his appeal: he fled to Rome, where he was out of their reach; and they said, "Even let him go." 2. That they desired to know particularly concerning the doctrine he preached, and the religion he took so much pains to propagate in the face of so much opposition (v. 22): *We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest*—*ἃ φρονεῖς* what thy opinions or sentiments are, what are those things which thou art so wise about, and hast such a relish of and such a zeal for; for, though we know little else of Christianity, we know it is a sect every where spoken against." Those who said this scornful spiteful word of the Christian religion were Jews, the chief of the Jews at Rome, who boasted of their knowledge (Rom. ii. 17), and yet this was all they knew concerning the Christian religion, that it was a sect every where spoken against. They put it into an ill name, and then ran it down. (1.) They looked upon it to be a sect, and this was false. True Christianity establishes that which is of common concern to all mankind, and is not built upon such narrow opinions and private interests as sects commonly owe their original to. It aims at no worldly benefit or advantage as sects do; but all its gains are spiritual and eternal. And, besides, it has a direct tendency to the uniting of the children of men, and not the dividing of them, and setting them at variance, as sects have. (2.) They said it was every where spoken against, and this was too true. All that they conversed with spoke against it, and therefore they concluded every body did: most indeed did. It is, and always has been, the lot of Christ's holy religion to be every where spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. 25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

We have here a short account of a long conference which Paul had with the Jews at Rome about the Christian religion. Though they were so far prejudiced against it, because it was every where spoken against, as to call it a sect, yet they were willing to give it a hearing, which was more than the Jews at Jerusalem would do. It is probable that these Jews at Rome, being men of larger acquaintance with the world and more general conversation, were more free in their enquiries than the bigoted Jews at Jerusalem were, and would not answer this matter before they heard it.

I. We are here told how Paul managed this conference in defence of the Christian religion. The Jews appointed the time, a day was set for this dispute, that all parties concerned might have sufficient notice, v. 23. Those Jews seemed well disposed to receive conviction, and yet it did not prove that they all were so. Now when the day came,

1. There were many got together to Paul. Though he was a prisoner, and could not come out to them, yet they were willing to come to him to his lodging. And the confinement he was now under, if duly considered, instead of prejudicing them against



his doctrine, ought to confirm it to them; for it was a sign not only that he believed it, but that he thought it worth suffering for. One would visit such a man as Paul in his prison rather than not have instruction from him. And he made room for them in his lodging, not fearing to give offence to the government, so that he might do good to them.

2. He was very large and full in his discourse with them, seeking their conviction more than his own vindication. (1.) He expounded, or explained, the kingdom of God to them,—showed them the nature of that kingdom and the glorious purposes and designs of it, that it is heavenly and spiritual, seated in the minds of men, and shines not in external pomp, but in purity of heart and life. That which kept the Jews in their unbelief was a misunderstanding of the kingdom of God, as if it came with observation; let but that be expounded to them, and set in a true light, and they will be brought into obedience to it. (2.) He not only expounded the kingdom of God, but he testified it,—plainly declared it to them, and confirmed it by incontestable proofs, that the kingdom of God by the Messiah's administration was come, and was now set up in the world. He attested the extraordinary powers in the kingdom of grace by which it was set up, and the miracles in the kingdom of nature by which it was confirmed. He bore his testimony to it from his own experience of its power and influence upon him, and the manner of his being brought into subjection to it. (3.) He not only expounded and testified the kingdom of God, but he persuaded them, urged it upon their consciences and pressed them with all earnestness to embrace the kingdom of God, and submit to it, and not to persist in an opposition to it. He followed his doctrine (the explication and confirmation of it) with a warm and lively application to his hearers, which is the most proper and profitable method of preaching. (4.) He persuaded them concerning Jesus. The design and tendency of his whole discourse were to bring them to Christ, to convince them of his being the Messiah, and to engage them to believe in him as he is offered in the gospel. He urged upon them, *τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*—the things concerning Jesus, the prophecies of him, which he read to them out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, as pointing at the Messiah, and showed how they had all had their accomplishment in this Jesus. They being Jews, he dealt with them out of the scriptures of the Old Testament, and demonstrated that these were so far from making against Christianity that they were the great proofs of it; so that, if we compare the history of the New Testament with the prophecy of the Old, we must conclude that this Jesus is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

3. He was very long; for he continued his discourse, and it should seem to have been a continued discourse, from morning till evening; perhaps it was a discourse eight or ten hours long. The subject was curious—he was full of it—it was of vast importance—he was in good earnest, and his heart was upon it—he knew not when he should have such another opportunity, and therefore, without begging pardon for tiring their patience, he kept them all day; but it is probable that he spent some of the time in prayer with them and for them.

II. What was the effect of this discourse. One would have thought that so good a cause as that of Christianity, and managed by such a skilful hand as Paul's, could not but carry the day, and that all the hearers would have yielded to it presently; but it did not prove so: the child Jesus is set for the fall of some and the rising again of others, a foundation stone to some and a stone of stumbling to others. 1. *They did not agree among themselves*, v. 25. Some of them thought Paul was in the right, others would not admit it. This is that division which Christ came to send, that fire which he came to kindle, Luke xii. 49, 51. Paul preached with a great deal of plainness and clearness, and yet his hearers could not agree about the sense and evidence of what he preached. 2. *Some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not*, v. 24. There was the disagreement. Such as this has always been the success of the gospel; to some it has been a *savour of life unto life*, to others a *savour of death unto death*. Some are wrought upon by the word, and others hardened; some receive the light, and others shut their eyes against it. So it was among Christ's hearers, and the spectators of his miracles, some believed and some blasphemed. If all had believed, there had been no disagreement; so that all the blame of the division lay upon those who would not believe.

III. The awakening word which Paul said to them at parting. He perceived by what they muttered that there were many among them, and perhaps the greater part, that were obstinate, and would not yield to the conviction of what he said; and they were getting up to be gone, they had had enough of it: "Hold," says Paul, "take one word with you before you go, and consider of it when you come home: what do you think will be the effect of your obstinate infidelity? What will you do in the end hereof? What will it come to?"

1 "You will by the righteous judgment of God be sealed up under unbelief. You harden your own hearts, and God will harden them as he did Pharaoh's; and this is what was prophesied of concerning you. Turn to that scripture (Isa. vi. 9, 10), and read it seriously, and tremble lest the case there described should prove to be your case." As

there are in the Old Testament gospel promises, which will be accomplished in all that believe, so there are gospel threatenings of spiritual judgments, which will be fulfilled in those that believe not; and this is one. It is part of the commission given to Isaiah the prophet; he is sent to make those worse that would not be made better. *Well spoke the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers.* What was spoken by JEHOVAH is here said to be spoken by the Holy Ghost, which proves that the Holy Ghost is God; and what was spoken to Isaiah is here said to be spoken by him to their fathers, for he was ordered to tell the people what God said to him; and, though what is there said had in it much of terror to the people and of grief to the prophet, yet it is here said to be well spoken. Hezekiah said concerning a message of wrath, *Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken*, Isa. xxxix. 8. And *he that believes not shall be damned* is gospel, as well as, *He that believes shall be saved*, Mark xvi. 16. Or this may be explained by that of our Saviour (Matt. xv. 7), "*Well did Esaias prophesy of you. The Holy Ghost said to your fathers, that which would be fulfilled in you, Hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand.*" (1.) "That which was their great sin against God is yours; and that is this, you will not see. You shut your eyes against the most convincing evidence possible, and will not admit the conclusion, though you cannot deny the premises: *Your eyes you have closed,*" v. 27. This intimates an obstinate infidelity, and a willing slavery to prejudice. "As your fathers would not see God's hand lifted up against them in his judgments (Isa. xxvi. 11), so you will not see God's hand stretched out to you in gospel grace." It was true of these unbelieving Jews that they were prejudiced against the gospel; they did not see, because they were resolved they would not, and none so blind as those that will not see. They would not prosecute their convictions, and for this reason would not admit them. They have purposely closed their eyes, *lest they should see with their eyes* the great things which belong to their everlasting peace, should see the glory of God, the amiableness of Christ, the deformity of sin, the beauty of holiness, the vanity of this world, and the reality of another. They will not be changed and governed by these truths, and therefore will not receive the evidence of them, *lest they should hear with their ears* that which they are loth to hear, the wrath of God revealed from heaven against them, and the will of God revealed from heaven to them. They stop their ears, like the deaf adder, that will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, *charm he ever so wisely.* Thus their fathers did; they would not hear, Zech. vii. 11, 12. And that which they are afraid of in shutting up their eyes and ears, and barricading (as it were) both their learning senses against him

that made both the hearing ear and the seeing eye, is, *lest they should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.* They kept their mind in the dark, or at least in a constant confusion and tumult, lest, if they should admit a considerate sober thought, they should understand with their heart how much it is both their duty and their interest to be religious, and so by degrees the truth should be too hard for them, and they should be converted from the evil ways which they take pleasure in, to those exercises to which they have now an aversion. Observe, God's method is to bring people first to see and hear, and so to understand with their hearts, and then to convert them, and bow their wills, and so heal them, which is the regular way of dealing with a rational soul; and therefore Satan prevents the conversion of souls to God by blinding the mind and darkening the understanding, 2 Cor. iv. 4. And the case is very sad when the sinner joins with him herein, and puts out his own eyes. *Ut liberius peccent, libenter ignorant—They plunge into ignorance, that they may sin the more freely.* They are in love with their disease, and are afraid lest God should heal them; like Babylon of old, We would have healed her, and she would not be healed, Jer. li. 9. This was the sin. (2.) "That which was the great judgment of God upon them for this sin is his judgment upon you, and that is, you shall be blind. God will give you up to a judicial infatuation: *Hearing you shall hear—you shall have the word of God preached to you over and over—but you shall not understand it; because you will not give your minds to understand it, God will not give you strength and grace to understand it. Seeing you shall see—you shall have abundance of miracles and signs done before your eyes—but you shall not perceive* the convincing evidence of them. Take heed lest what Moses said to your fathers should be true of you (Deut. xxix. 4), *The Lord has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day; and what Isaiah said to the men of his generation* (Isa. xxix. 10—12), *The Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes.*" What with their resisting the grace of God and rebelling against the light, and God's withdrawing and withholding his grace and light from them,—what with their not receiving the love of the truth, and God's giving them up for that to strong delusions, to believe a lie,—what with their wilful and what with their judicial hardness, *the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing.* They are stupid and senseless, and not wrought upon by all that can be said to them. No physic that can be given them operates upon them, nor will reach them, and therefore their disease must be adjudged incurable, and their case desperate. How should those be happy that will not be



healed of a disease that makes them miserable? And how should those be healed that will not be converted to the use of the methods of cure? And how should those be converted that will not be convinced either of their disease or of their remedy? And how should those be convinced that *shut their eyes and stop their ears*? Let all that hear the gospel, and do not heed it, tremble at this doom; for, when once they are thus given up to hardness of heart, they are already in the suburbs of hell; for who shall heal them, if God do not?

2. "Your unbelief will justify God in sending the gospel to the Gentile world, which is the thing you look upon with such a jealous eye (v. 28): therefore seeing you put the grace of God away from you, and will not submit to the power of divine truth and love, seeing you will not be converted and healed in the methods which divine wisdom has appointed, *therefore be it known unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles*, that salvation which was of the Jews only (John iv. 22), the offer of it is made to them, the means of it afforded to them, and they stand fairer for it than you do; it is sent to them, and they will hear it, and receive it, and be happy in it. Now Paul designs hereby, (1.) To abate their displeasure at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, by showing them the absurdity of it. They were angry that the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles, and thought it was too great a favour done to them; but, if they thought that salvation of so small a value as not to be worthy of their acceptance, surely they could not grudge it to the Gentiles as too good for them, nor envy them for it. The salvation of God was sent into the world, the Jews had the first offer of it, it was fairly proposed to them, it was earnestly pressed upon them, but they refused it; they would not accept the invitation which was given to them first to the wedding-feast and therefore must thank themselves if other guests be invited. If they will not strike the bargain, nor come up to the terms, they ought not to be angry at those that will. They cannot complain that the Gentiles took it over their heads, or out of their hands, for they had quite taken their hands off it, nay, *they had lifted up the heel against it*; and therefore it is their fault, for *it is through their fall that salvation is come to the Gentiles*, Rom. xi. 11. (2.) To improve their displeasure at the favour done to the Gentiles to their advantage, and to bring good out of that evil; for when he had spoken of this very thing in his epistle to the Romans, the benefit which the Gentiles had by the unbelief and rejection of the Jews, he says, he took notice of it on purpose that he might provoke his dear countrymen the Jews to a *holy emulation, and might save some of them*, Rom. xi. 14. The Jews have rejected the gospel of Christ, and pushed it off to the Gentiles, but it is not yet too late to repent of

their refusal, and to accept of the salvation which they did make light of; they may say No, and take it, as the elder brother in the parable, who, when he was bidden to *go work in the vineyard*, first said, *I will not*, and yet *afterwards repented and went*, Matt. xxi. 29. Is the gospel sent to the Gentiles? Let us go after it rather than come short of it. And will they hear it, who are thought to be out of hearing, and have been so long like the idols they worshipped, *that have ears and hear not*? And shall not we hear it, whose privilege it is to have God so nigh to us in all that we call upon him for? Thus he would have them to argue, and to be shamed into the belief of the gospel by the welcome it met with among the Gentiles. And, if it had not that effect upon them, it would aggravate their condemnation, as it did that of the scribes and Pharisees, who, when they saw the publicans and harlots submit to John's baptism, did not afterwards thereupon repent of their folly, *that they might believe him*, Matt. xxi. 32.

IV. The breaking up of the assembly, as it should seem, in some disorder. 1. They turned their backs upon Paul. Those of them that believed not were extremely nettled at that last word which he said, that they should be judicially blinded, and that the light of the gospel should shine among those that sat in darkness. *When Paul had said these words*, he had said enough for them, and *they departed*, perhaps not so much enraged as some others of their nation had been upon the like occasion, but stupid and unconcerned, no more affected, either with those terrible words in the close of his discourse or all the comfortable words he had spoken before, than the seats they sat on. They departed, many of them with a resolution never to hear Paul preach again, nor trouble themselves with further enquiries about this matter. 2. They set their faces one against another; for they had great disputes among themselves. There was not only a quarrel between those who believed and those who believed not, but even among those who believed not there were debates. Those that agreed to depart from Paul, yet agreed not in the reasons why they departed, but had *great reasoning among themselves*. Many have great reasoning who yet do not reason right, can find fault with one another's opinions, and yet not yield to truth. Nor will men's reasoning among themselves convince them, without the grace of God to open their understandings.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence. no man forbidding him.

We are here taking our leave of the history

of blessed Paul; and therefore, since God saw it not fit that we should know any more of him, we should carefully take notice of every particular of the circumstances in which we must here leave him.

I. It cannot but be a trouble to us that we must leave him in bonds for Christ, nay, and that we have no prospect given us of his being set at liberty. *Two whole years* of that good man's life are here spent in confinement, and, for aught that appears, he was never enquired after, all that time, by those whose prisoner he was. He appealed to Cæsar, in hope of a speedy discharge from his imprisonment, the governors having signified to his imperial majesty concerning the prisoner *that he had done nothing worthy of death or bonds*, and yet he is detained a prisoner. So little reason have we to trust in men, especially despised prisoners in great men; witness the case of Joseph, whom *the chief butler remembered not, but forgot*, Gen. xl. 23. Yet some think that though it be not mentioned here, yet it was in the former of these two years, and early too in that year, that he was first brought before Nero, and then his bonds in Christ were manifest in Cæsar's court, as he says, Phil. i. 13. And at this first answer it was that *no man stood by him*, 2 Tim. iv. 16. But it seems, instead of being set at liberty upon this appeal, as he expected, he hardly escaped out of the emperor's hands with his life; he calls it a deliverance out of the mouth of the lion, 2 Tim. iv. 17, and his speaking there of his first answer intimates that since that he had a second, in which he had come off better, and yet was not discharged. During these two years' imprisonment he wrote his epistle to the Galatians, then his second epistle to Timothy, then those to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, in which he mentions several things particularly concerning his imprisonment; and, lastly, his epistle to the Hebrews just after he was set at liberty, as Timothy also was, who, coming to visit him, was upon some account or other made his fellow-prisoner (*with whom*, writes Paul to the Hebrews (xiii. 23), *if he come shortly, I will see you*), but how or by what means he obtained his liberty we are not told, only that two years he was a prisoner. Tradition says that after his discharge he went from Italy to Spain, thence to Crete, and so with Timothy into Judea, and thence went to visit the churches in Asia, and at length came a second time to Rome, and there was beheaded in the last year of Nero. But Baronius himself owns that there is no certainty of any thing concerning him betwixt his release from this imprisonment and his martyrdom; but it is said by some that Nero, having, when he began to play the tyrant, set himself against the Christians, and persecuted them (and he was the first of the emperors that made a law against them, as Tertullian says, *Apol. cap. 5*), the church at Rome was much

weakened by that persecution, and this brought Paul the second time to Rome, to re-establish the church there, and to comfort the souls of the disciples that were left, and so he fell a second time into Nero's hand. And Chrysostom relates that a young woman that was one of Nero's misses (to speak modishly) being converted, by Paul's preaching, to the Christian faith, and so brought off from the lewd course of life she had lived, Nero was incensed against Paul for it, and ordered him first to be imprisoned, and then put to death. But to keep to this short account here given of it, 1. It would grieve one to think that such a useful man as Paul was should be so long in restraint. Two years he was a prisoner under Felix (*ch. xxiv. 27*), and, besides all the time that passed between that and his coming to Rome, he is here two years more a prisoner under Nero. How many churches might Paul have planted, how many cities and nations might he have brought over to Christ, in these five years' time (for so much it was at least), if he had been at liberty! But God is wise, and will show that he is no debtor to the most useful instruments he employs, but can and will carry on his own interest, both without their services and by their sufferings. Even Paul's bonds fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, Phil. i. 12—14. 2. Yet even Paul's imprisonment was in some respects a kindness to him, for these *two years he dwelt in his own hired house*, and that was more, for aught I know, than ever he had done before. He had always been accustomed to sojourn in the houses of others, now he has a house of his own—his own while he pays the rent of it; and such a retirement as this would be a refreshment to one who had been all his days an itinerant. He had been accustomed to be always upon the remove, seldom staid long at a place, but now he lived for two years in the same house; so that the bringing of him into this prison was like Christ's call to his disciples *to come into a desert place, and rest awhile*, Mark vi. 3. When he was at liberty, he was in continual fear by reason of the *lying in wait of the Jews* (*ch. xx. 19*), but now his prison was his castle. Thus *out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness*.

II. Yet it is a pleasure to us (for we are sure it was to him) that, though we leave him in bonds for Christ, yet we leave him at work for Christ, and this made his bonds easy that he was not by them bound out from serving God and doing good. His prison becomes a temple, a church, and then it is to him a palace. His hands are tied, but, thanks be to God, his mouth is not stopped; a faithful zealous minister can better bear any hardship than being silenced. Here is Paul a prisoner, and yet a preacher; he is bound, but the word of the Lord is not bound. When he wrote his epistle to the Romans, he said *he longed to see them, that he might impart unto*



them some spiritual gift (Rom. i. 11); he was glad to see some of them (v. 15), but it would not be half his joy unless he could impart to them some spiritual gift, which here he has an opportunity to do, and then he will not complain of his confinement. Observe,

1. To whom he preached: to all that had a mind to hear him, whether Jews or Gentiles. Whether he had liberty to go to other houses to preach does not appear; it is likely not; but whoever would had liberty to come to his house to hear, and they were welcome: *He received all that came to him.* Note, Ministers' doors should be open to such as desire to receive instruction from them, and they should be glad of an opportunity to advise those that are in care about their souls. Paul could not preach in a synagogue, or any public place of meeting that was sumptuous and capacious, but he preached in a poor cottage of his own. Note, When we cannot do what we would in the service of God we must do what we can. Those ministers that have but little hired houses should rather preach in them, if they may be allowed to do that, than be silent. *He received all that came to him,* and was not afraid of the greatest, nor ashamed of the meanest. He was ready to preach on the first day of the week to Christians, on the seventh day to Jews, and to all who would come on any day of the week; and he might hope the better to speed because *they came in unto him*, which supposed a desire to be instructed and a willingness to learn, and where these are it is probable that some good may be done.

2. What he preached. He does not fill their heads with curious speculations, nor with matters of state and politics, but he keeps to his text, minds his business as an apostle. (1.) He is God's ambassador, and therefore *preaches the kingdom of God*, does all he can to preach it up, negotiates the affairs of it, in order to the advancing of all its true interests. He meddles not with the affairs of the kingdoms of men; let those treat of them whose work it is. He preaches the kingdom of God among men, and the word of that kingdom; the same that he defended in his public disputes, *testifying the kingdom of God* (v. 23), he enforced in his public preaching, as that which, if received aright, will make us all wise and good, wiser and better, which is the end of preaching. (2.) He is an agent for Christ, a friend of the bridegroom, and therefore *teaches those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*—the whole history of Christ, his incarnation, doctrine, life miracles, death, resurrection, ascension; all that relates to the mystery of

godliness. Paul stuck still to his principle—to know and preach *nothing but Christ, and him crucified*. Ministers, when in their preaching they are tempted to diverge from that which is their main business, should reduce themselves with this question, What does this concern the Lord Jesus Christ? What tendency has it to bring us to him, and to keep us walking in him? *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ.*

3. With what liberty he preached. (1.) Divine grace gave him a liberty of spirit. He preached *with all confidence*, as one that was himself well assured of the truth of what he preached—that it was what he durst stand by; and of the worth of it—that it was what he durst suffer for. He was *not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*. (2.) Divine Providence gave him a liberty of speech: *No man forbidding him*, giving him any check for what he did or laying any restraint upon him. The Jews that used to forbid him to speak to the Gentiles had no authority here; and the Roman government as yet took no cognizance of the profession of Christianity as a crime. Herein we must acknowledge the hand of God, [1.] Setting bounds to the rage of persecutors; where he does not turn the heart, yet he can tie the hand and bridle the tongue. Nero was a bloody man, and there were many, both Jews and Gentiles, in Rome, that hated Christianity; and yet so it was, unaccountably, that Paul though a prisoner was connived at in preaching the gospel, and it was not construed a breach of the peace. Thus God makes *the wrath of men to praise him, and restrains the remainder of it*, Ps. lxxvi. 10. Though there were so many that had it in their power to forbid Paul's preaching (even the common soldier that kept him might have done it), yet God so ordered it, *that no man did forbid him*. [2.] See God here providing comfort for the relief of the persecuted. Though it was a very low and narrow sphere of opportunity that Paul was here placed in, compare with what he had been in, yet, such as it was, he was not molested nor disturbed in it. Though it was not a wide door that was opened to him, yet it was kept open, and no man was suffered to shut it; and it was to many an effectual door, so that there were saints even in Cæsar's household, Phil. iv. 22. When the city of our solemnities is thus made a quiet habitation at any time, and we are fed from day to day with the bread of life, no man forbidding us, we must give thanks to God for it and prepare for changes, still longing for that holy mountain in which there shall never be any pricking brier nor grieving thorn.













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